

THE WIRE

ADVENTURE IN SOUNDS

ISSUE 177 • NOVEMBER 2001 £2.80 / US \$6.50

Reggae
Madonna

perverse improv

Squarepusher's
jukebox

James
Blow
for beginners

Thomas
Fehlmann

Rod Dylan's
voice

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Issue 001 - 11



Django's New Pie. Buy a big old pie. Using a bloody sharp knife hack off the pastry and packaging. Spread the insides of the old pie over your work-surface taking care not to become tainted by any part of them. Subtract the additives. Pick out the seed from the chaff. Work the remains with much attention to tiny detail. Throw good and unexpected things into this mixture until it becomes *dense*. Friends may bring spices and other excitables at this point; be unsparing with *these*. Carry this mixture with you all over the world displaying it, tending and honing it regularly. It may stick to the pan, that's OK. When you get home, you may find that no shops are able to take this product, in which case you should feed it to your close ones. Serve with potatoes and * pride.

You're so clever y, Djanago

- 15/11 London QEH
- 17/11 Manchester, Royal College of Northern Music
- 19/11 Norwich Jazz Festival, Assembly House
- 20/11 Wakefield Sports and Leisure Club
- 21/11 Birmingham, The Custard Factory

Django Bates will be appearing at the Virgin Megastore, Oxford Street, London on Tuesday November 10 at 6.30pm with the Quer Nightz group



Al Marc Desret
in certain realms
20005
Marc Desret
electric guitar

b) Django Bates
Quer Nightz 20001

Django Bates keyboards
& E-flat horn
Eoin Bellamy, saxophones
Michael Moanear, electric bass
Marius Fraser drums
Jescah Costholm, vocals

c) Bloodcount
Unsound 20001

d) Bloodcount
Discretion 20003
Tim Berne, alto and baritone saxophones
Vivian Bladder, alto and baritone saxophones & clarinet
Michael Formanek, double-bass
Tom Black, drums

e) Paraphrase
Visitation Rites 20002

Tim Berne, alto and baritone saxophones
David Grubbs, double-bass
Tom Rainey, drums

f) Michael Formanek
An I Bothering You? 20006
Michael Formanek, double-bass



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PARAPHRASE

"Visitation Rites is a wild, at times breathless album, a howling banshee wall next to syncopated rhythmic switches. There are moments when grief becomes majestic." *TCU*

MARC DUCREY "The agility of his performance is consistently fascinating and his musical resourcefulness is endlessly impressive, as he switches idiom without apparent effort. Highly attractive, superbly played recording." *The Wire*

MICHAEL FORMANEK "Two excellent examples of personal and inventive free-improvised acoustic jazz with no prop, no spike end no intrusive image—the common thread being the formidable American bass-player Michael Formanek. ...Formanek's solo set ranks with the great solo bass performances." *The Guardian*

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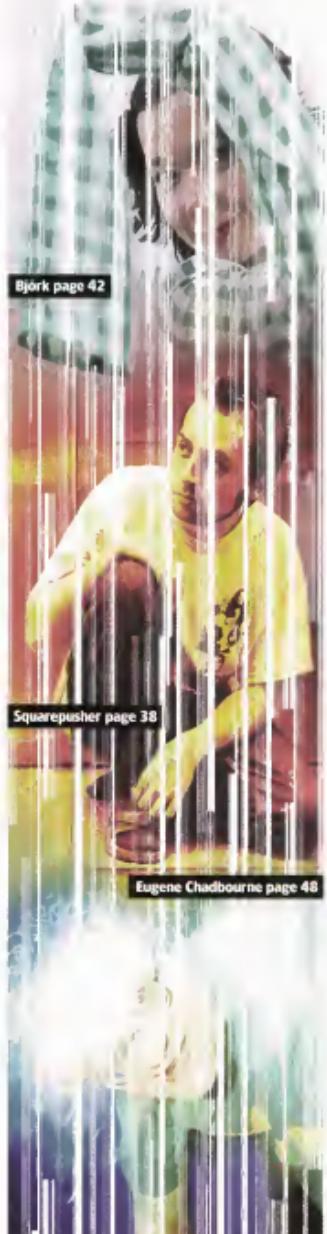
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Your track by track guide to this month's free cover mount CD*

THE WIRE



SLICKER

"Prader" (from the Hefty album *Confidence In Duber*)
Chicago resident John Hughes — son of the film director — was responsible for the gritty post-rock

■ Bill Dury, before the group's demise last year. Now he's back with a new album of stream-of-consciousness Electronicdrum 'n' bass. Essentially a solo studio project, *Confidence In Duber* features vibes by Rick Emrich and guitar from Euphone's Ryan Rapsos, plus textures culled from samples of crowd roars, farm animals, creaks and crashes to effect the "sculptural approach to making music" favoured by Hughes: "All that was going through my head was 'start ugly, end smooth!'" Is the auteur's only clue to the tense rhythmiss of "Prader"? Hefty is distributed by Shellshock.



RHYS CHATHAM

"Hard Edge" (Live mix of a track from the forthcoming Wire Editions album)

Rhys Chatham's composed pieces for multiple electric guitars in the 70s and 80s were cut from similar cloth as the works of Glenn Branca (although stitched together with threads picked up from his earlier associations with LaMonte Young, Jon Hassell, Terry Riley and Tony Conrad). Now resident in Paris, he has been rediscovering trumpet, his first instrument — and bolting on an array of electronic effects to create the kind of exhilarating live Electronicai found on the two Ninja Tune EPs *Neon* (with Martin Wheeler) and *Sextet*. On this session for the revitalised Wire Editions label, we hooked Rhys up with some of London's most lary and dynamic improvisors: stereo guitars! Gary Smith, keyboards样本 Pat Thomas, bassist Gary Jeff, and drummer Lou Ciccone. "My goal," says Rhys, "is to get in touch with my audience's spine-body by creating a series of extremely repetitive, mind-deadening sounds. I find that by deadening, possibly

destroying the intellect, one can actually make people feel. I attempt to make people stop thinking for as long as possible when they listen to what I do. I believe that, as time goes by, I stop people from thinking more effectively, at least that's what I hope." For more information on The Wire Editions label, e-mail: the_wire@ukonline.co.uk



ANGELA JAEGER &

DAVID CUNNINGHAM

"Wood And Glass" (from the Piano album *Artificial Homeland*)

Angela Jaeger has travelled far since her experiences in New York's late 70s punk scene. In London, she sang in numerous leftfield music outfits including The Monochrome Set, Bush Tetras, Billy Mackenzie and Pigbag. Last year, after a spell in Barcelona, she returned to NYC. David Cunningham has an equally illustrious history as the founder of avant popsters The Flying Lizards and the Puno label; he recently created sound installations in London and Sydney. "Artificial Homelands are those mysterious territories and mythologies that a transient urbanized species needs to invent — a failed memory syndrome, a replicant family photograph," states Cunningham. "This music is derived from slowed-down tapes, loops and treatments, a mix of composed music and improvisation; most of the instrumental material providing Ambient backgrounds, dense harmonically shifting drones graced with Angela's voice providing improvised melodic explorations of the harmonic structures. Sometimes there are words, sometimes it sounds like words, sometimes something else happens." Pono is distributed by Pinnacle.



DAF

"Alles Ist Gut" (from the Grey Area Of Mute album *Alles Ist Gut*)

Dafled for two years in the fun terror tactics of Düsseldorf's early German punk scene, DAF (Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft) burst onto the European pop mainstream



TAPPER 2

In 1981 In a whirlwind 18 months Robert Gorl and vocalist Gibi Delgado-Lopez rose fast, fell hard and then fell apart, leaving behind three Virgin/Anale albums of minimalist electronics pulsing with sex and sweat. According to Gibi, at home DAF alienated both conservatives and radicals. "The people who reacted against DAF could not handle lust or pleasure, they had a really puritanical attitude towards these things." "Alles Ist Gut" is the title track of their breakthrough 1981 album, which, along with *Gold Und Liebe* and *Fur immer*, has just been reissued. The Grey Area Of Music is distributed by Vital.



TOM ZÉ
"Defect 2: Curiosidade" (from the *Luxo Bop* album
Fabrication Defect: Com Defeito De Fabricação)

Tom Zé is part of the generation of experimental pop musicians that also includes Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa which polished its chops in 60s Brazil's giddy meetings of samba, politics and avant garde art. 25 years ago, Zé could be found composing music for tape recorders triggered by doorbells, floor sanders, typewriters, blenders and radios. Now, on his third album for David Byrne's Luxo Bop imprint, he continues to push his vision of psychedelic folclor. "Songs are inside of me, like pearls resting in oysters," says Zé. "It takes of grain of sand many years of rubbing before it becomes a pearl. That's why it takes so long for my songs to develop." Luxo Bop is distributed by WEA.



MERIDIEM
"Interference" (from the *Materiell Sonori* album
Meridiem)

For this studio project, singer, poet and writer Percy Howard — a member of Sub Rosa group Nus — hooked up with the winning team of Bill Laswell (bass), Fred Frith (guitar)

and Charles Hayward (drums). *Mendem* was recorded in January 1998 in New York, and represents an important statement for Howard. "It has come to mean for me the axis on which teeters infinite possibility, the abyss or heaven, rage or joy, love or lust, destruction or brotherhood. My hope is that we can thrust ourselves into a chain of almost stereotypical beauty and romance, harness the emotional flavour of 'out' playing and direct this into the space of ineffusive beauty and violent catharsis." *Materiell Sonori* is distributed by Cargo.



JANE DOWE & THAEMPLITZ
"03/DTD/05:56" (from the *Mille Plateaux* album
Institutional Collaborative)

California based Terrie Thaemplitz is one of the most original voices in contemporary Electronic. On albums such as *Couture Cosmique*, *Ments From An End*, and *Kraftwerk* tribute *Die Roboter Roboto*, plus the 12" released on his Commezine label, Thaemplitz uses textual motifs to explore theoretical issues surrounding the creation and reception of music. *Institutional Collaborative* documents a sound-file exchange with journalist/computer musician Dowe. According to the duo, "Track titles for *Institutional Collaborative* are based on a formula of 'track number/exchange path of source material/theme', so the 'DTD' in '03/DTD/05:56' refers to a three-part audio exchange starting with Dowe, then Thaemplitz and Dowe again. We did most of the work on the track in June of 1997. One of *Institutional Collaborative*'s themes is the collapse of the Ambient marketplace of the late 80s and early 90s, and how that conditions the production and reception of electroacoustic music. There are several allusions to 'marketable' Ambient music, some more obvious and satirical than others, such as the 'Mog in a droopy cave' quality of this track's initial generated sounds. The primary

processing technique remains the same as the track progresses, but the sound begins sonically and statistically evolving toward more notably digital results." *Mille Plateaux* is distributed by SRD.



TARWATER
"V-AT" (from the *Kitty-Yo* album *Silur*)

East Berliners Bernd Jesträ and Ronald Lippok have been creating dark assemblages of samples, loops and found poetry since their early days in art outfit Ornament Und Verbrechen. Despite Lippok's other post as drummer in To Rococo Rot, and Jesträ's soundtrack productions in his Bleibel Studio, the duo produced three albums in as many years. John Donne, T. S. Eliot, and Robert Moon (the latter also accompanied by a remix CD). As ingredients in their fourth, *Silur*, they cite East Coast Hip-Hop, Cool minimal Japanese Electronica and the compositions of Carl Wilson. Say the duo: "V-AT" was recorded at Bleibel Studio in Berlin in January 98 when we were just about to finish the new album. A friend told us that it reminded him of soundtracks for science fiction movies that he watched on TV when he was a child. Very much so!" *Kitty-Yo* is distributed by SRD.



POWERFIELD
"Block" (from the forthcoming *Parastatic* album *Electronic Electric Electronic*)

Drummer and electronic percussion pioneer Jon Gallivan has been a merciful presence in the field of avant jazz for over 30 years. His career has included stints with Larry Young during the keyboardist's most inspired electric phase (documented on *Love Cry World*), and as percussionist with G Evans. He currently runs his New Jazz label from Hawaii. A recent London trip saw him thrown into this power electronics session with 'stereo guitarist' Gary Smith



and improviser Pat Thomas, for a CD scheduled to appear at the end of this year. □ *Protractile* is distributed by Harmonia Mundi



SAM PREKOP "Showrooms" (from the forthcoming *Thrill Jockey* album)

Sam Prekop will be known to most as singer with The Sea And Cake, but for his debut solo album he was joined by some leading lights of Chicago's fertile experimental rock scene: Archer Prewitt, Chad Taylor of Chicago Underground Orchestra, and Josh Abrams of Town & Country on bass. Organ and backing vocals come courtesy of Windy City prime mover Jim O'Rourke, who also produced the as yet untitled album. □ *Thrill Jockey* is distributed by Cargo



PUPPY "Hot Juice" (Sprawl Imprint, previously unreleased)

Dave Hodgson, aka Puppy, was born in the UK Midlands in 1969, and after various jobs including studio assistant with Trevor Horn, collaborations with Kevin Saunderson, CJ Macaskill and Tim Simenon, now finds himself writing computer games for Microsoft in Seattle. "When I start a track," comments Hodgson of his solo Electronica, "I generally have a pretty good idea of how I want it to sound. By the time it's finished, however, it always seems to be something entirely different." "Hot Juice" began life after I'd been listening to The Propellerheads every day on my drive to work. ... Puppy's debut album, *Hotnotizt*, is due for release on The Sprawl imprint early in 1999. □ *The Sprawl Imprint* is distributed by SBD



JAD FAIR & YO LA TENGO "Minnesota Man Claims Monkey Bowled Perfect Game" (from the Matador album *Strange But True*)

Jad Fair's Half Japanese set the standard for many US lo-fi groups over the last ten years; the circle was completed four years ago when he was asked to play on a bill with Yo La Tengo. From this meeting, *Strange But True* spontaneously took shape over a two year period, with the participants jamming material to tape as quickly as possible. Here's what Yo La's Ira Kaplan has to say of the chosen track: "Third and final song on *Strange But True* concerning monkeys. Recorded a few years ago in our practice space on

the site of what is currently a vacant lot. Guitar player's claim left on the track to prove first-take authenticity." □ *Matador* is distributed by Vital



THE PASTELS

"Leaving This Island (Jim O'Rourke Remix)" (from the Domino album *Mummets*)

Stephen Pastell, Katrina Mitchell and Aggi are a longstanding fixture on the Glasgow independent scene: their first single, "Heavens Above", was issued in 1982, quickly followed by two 7"s on Alan McGee's Fledgling Creation label. Since then, The Pastels have survived numerous line-up changes and lay-offs, surfacing occasionally — as they did earlier this year, with their *Mummets* LP. This track is taken from the remix album *Luminous*, featuring a brand new string arrangement from Jim O'Rourke, who says: "Some music seems ready to be remixed in a more structural way, being some kind of cracked mirror. But for me, 'Leaving This Island' was already so perfect, I thought it was best to do a 'version' rather than 'remixing' it. Any chance to do a string arrangement I jump at, especially for such a beautiful song." □ *Domino* is distributed by Vital



BADAWI

"Final Warning" (from the Asphodel EP *Final Warning*)

"This was a concept I was working on doing Moroccan rhythms electronically," is how Ras Mesnil, aka Badawi, describes his *Final Warning* EP. Ras does indeed bring the fundamentalist zeal of Islamic percussion to the libtent sound palette, and as well as recording under the Bedawi banner, works with DJ John Ward in the bottom-heavy Sub Dub. □ *Asphodel* is distributed by SBD



LABRADFORD

"V (Harold Budd Remix)" (Blast First, previously unreleased)

Pozzani, the debut 1994 release by this Virginia trio, was one of the original "bolotonist" guitar/drone works of the 90s. Since then, Mark Nelson, Carter Brown and Robert Bonne have ploughed a steady furrow in quest of the rumitative, tranquil mood pieces in which they specialise — an aural analogue to the still melancholy of a Rothko canvas. They have released three further albums on Blast First — *Labradford*, *A Stable Reference* and *M Media Morano*, which are being reissued later this year in the wake of the recent Festival Of Drifting in London, which they co-curated. This Harold Budd mix will be available on a limited 12". □ *Blast First* is distributed by Vital



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Smith Quartet & guests

Riley's In C, Good Medicine and other works
10.15pm FreeStage performance: Spring Heel
Jack, with Paul Hartsell and Jason Pierce
(spiritualized) performing specially created
work plus tracks from forthcoming Spring Heel
Jack and Crystal releases

Saturday 24 October

The Brood

with Susan Stenger, Gavin Bryars,
David Thomas, John Tilbury,
Pan Sonic, Bruce Gilbert (Wire)
& others

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Modern chamber music

Saturday 31 October

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Marc Ribot

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Play John Adams

Monday 23 November

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Tuesday 24 November

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Issue 177 November 1998
£2.05/1.50/50p/US\$ 0952-0566/US\$062311

45-46 Poland Street • London W1V 3DF • UK
Tel: 0171 439 6421 • Fax: 0171 237 4287
E-mail: the_wire@junkline.co.uk
Website: www.dfuse.com/the-wire

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Photos **Amy & Trevor, Julian Anderson, Frank Besser, Dean Belcher, Iris Garrels, Adonis Lawrence, Simon Leaga, Magda, Jim Miles, Savage Penell, Maria Ramonete, Nick Strangeglove, Michele Turrial, Eva Vermandel**

Cover photo of Books in Reggae by **Frank Besser**

Additional thanks this issue to **Mike Shattock**

Distribution

UK & Europe

Seymour

Distribution

86 Newmarket Street
London W1V 3DF, UK
Tel 0171 396 8000
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Call free 1800 221 3148

USA

Eastern News

Distributors

250 West 55th Street
New York, NY 10019 USA
Tel 212 649 4884
USA newsstand queries
call toll free 1800 221 3148

Subscriptions

Rates (12 issues)

The Wire

45-46 Poland Street

London W1V 3DF, UK

Holiday +44 (0)171 734 3555

E-mail: the_wire@junkline.co.uk \$50 £35 Surface

UK £30

Europe £35

USA \$60/£35

Rest Of World

\$50 £35 Surface

Chairman of the Namra Group: **Nnam Asifullah**

Founder: **Anthony Weed**

Printed by St. Gobain C.

The Wire is a member of the Namra Group.
The Namra Group is a not-for-profit organisation set up in 1981 to administer royalty fees for the use of music in public performance and for mechanical reproduction.
For further information contact: The Namra Group, 101 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016, USA. Tel: 212 939 1514. Fax: 212 939 1514.

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editor's Idea

A refrigerated lorry, belonging to F&R Frozen Foods, parked round the corner from The Wire office. On the side panels and tailgate is stencilled the legend 'Frozen • Chilled • Ambient'. A Friday evening episode of the BBC's GP soap *Dongerfield* with a story line involving an unringed cello and a noisy neighbour, titled "Silence Is A Rhythm Too". A Saturday morning radio feature on mountaineering, during which it is revealed that certain characteristic sections of particularly tricky rock face are known by the names 'Live Evil' and 'White Light White Heat'. Where's all this heading? Nowhere in particular, except I never thought I'd see the day when Thomas Koner, The Sits, electric-era Miles Davis and The Velvet Underground would exert an influence. However subliminal, on the worlds of frozen food distribution, prime-time TV drama, and mountaineering respectively.

If I had access to it in advance, perhaps I could have used the above information as evidence to support my admittedly feeble assertion made during a recent panel discussion on the current, possibly parlous state of the avant garde that 'specialist' music filters into mass culture in ways more mysterious and less quantifiable than that of Michael Nyman. The location for this lukewarm debate was a 16th century castle turned modern art gallery on the Canary island of Lanzarote, which is a far more interesting fact than anything that was actually discussed. I'm going to write about the panel, and the music festival it was attached to, in next month's Global Ear section, so that's all from Lanzarote for this month.

Another random thought: if the Internet is the future of music retail, as someone rather suggestively during that panel discussion (I feel it might even have been me), then how come on a Saturday afternoon, there isn't room to swing a cat, let alone get within earshot of the rack divides, in the record emporia that are scattered throughout the grid of streets surrounding Wire HQ?

Not that I can actually find anything in these damn places when I do finally elbow my way to the front of the browsers.

For instance I've been searching for a new(ish) four LP compilation of tracks originally released on the cusp of the decade by the unparalleled New York house label Nu-Groove. I've stared at the browsers in both

megastores and backstreet holes-in-the-wall, tried to second-guess the twisted logic with which rack-jockers apply their 'trade', rifled through daubers marked 'Techno', 'House', 'Garage', 'Trance', 'Soul & Dance', hell, even 'Nu Groove', but can I find a copy of it anywhere? Forget it. I am now beginning to doubt the record's very existence, despite the fact that I first heard about it via a column written for another publication by an otherwise trustworthy journalist with whom I am vaguely acquainted.

Why am I making so much effort to track down a compilation of old House tracks, most of which I already own on 12" vinyl? Because Nu Groove was the business, one of the unacknowledged legislators of the global electronic network. At the height of Acineeeeeed madness, the label's productions by the likes of Bobby Konders, the Burnell Brothers and Vandal (the collagen-lipped Venus Daou in collaboration with hubby Peter) proposed an alternative model for electronic dance music, one which was flexible enough to accommodate elliptical spoken word passages, digital fusion-inspired keyboard jams, and which was subsequently adopted and adapted by labels such as Warp, Basic Channel, R&B and more.

With regard to the above, it has been brought to my attention that certain observers of this column think I spend an inordinate amount of time discussing old music (although I'll wager most of it is new to you, so what's the difference?). So let me now point you in the direction of this month's free cover mount CD, the second volume in our ongoing series of *The Wire Topper* compilations showcasing various strands of new and undiscovered music. From blustering noise to near-silence, the CD contains something for everyone, as I believe the saying goes. But once again, we must apologize to our overseas newsstand readers for the fact that their issue of the magazine will arrive without a copy of *The Wire Topper* stuck to the front. But due to the territorial licensing restrictions which apply to such promotional CDs, there ain't a damn thing we can do about it. If you are an overseas reader, the only way to ensure you get future volumes of *The Wire Topper* (we have three more planned for this year) is to take out a subscription. Does that sound like a bribe? It isn't, it's just sheer good sense. **TONY HERRINGTON**

The December issue of *The Wire*: on sale Tuesday 24 November

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IN STORES NOW:

SPANISH FLY *Rags to Britches*

A trio of tuba, slide guitar and trumpet seems perversely matched, but Spanish Fly, led by Sex Pistols' Steven Bernstein, plays with a degree of wit and style not usually associated with such a brash dismantling of musical genres.



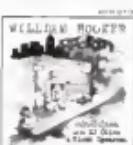
BRAXTON & PAVONE *Seven Standards*

Expertly manipulating the tension between structure and freedom, these two giants of free-jazz lend their hand to deconstructing classics such as "Dewey Square" by Charlie Parker and "Straight Street" by John Coltrane. Also featuring Dave Douglas, Thomas Chapin, and Phoebe Akeff.



WILLIAM HOOKER *Mindfulness*

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WIRE



letters

Harder than the rest

Just thought I would send some well deserved praise to Rob Young and *The Wire* in general for yet another A1 edition. The Harder! Faster! Louder! feature (*The Wire* 176) was a welcome insight to this realisation and growing interest in 'experimental chaos'.

It's about time more people realised that electronic music is becoming hackneyed and predictable – and all the more reason for soundsmiths the length and breadth of Britain to start doing what THEY want to do, instead of following the same tawdry blueprints while Trance CDs, predictable club nights for rebels without a clue. The best nights in Manchester over the last three years have been Discoboy (Boyd Ract, Stock, Housen & Walkman, etc.), the Toolshed at the Night & Day Café, and of course Matt Thompson's irregular nights all over.

As one of the luminaries stated in the article the ideas have gone before, but with the new spangled technology, the world is our oyster! As for tossers like Klaus Lynggaard (Letters, same issue), people like that should stick to reading *A&E* and *Smash Hits*. So come on people! Set up your samplers, plug in your Arps and Moogs, and pour petrol all over them! But don't forget to record the results! I mean, come on... Where else can you find a magazine in your local newsagent that has a letter from Chris and Cosey, a feature on Chris Watson, then mentions Bennett Angier and Bobby Cuadra Beausoleil — jackpot!

Tim Jones Manchester

Great to see *The Wire* going from strength to strength with yet another of its periodic arccing round the latest drop-nomines making up a shifting scene defined by its allegiance to sonic nihilism. Very brave of you to put three scally bastards on the cover. Have you heard "Tamaipan Record Theft"? It's so hard and radical it jumped bail last week and was last seen on some waste ground near Piccadilly Station giving a discarded set of decks some welly before becoming a student up on a late-night bus.

Nice to see an article on Toru Takemitsu too. I've always thought he was an alien. Must have been the way he could drink a lot and wear a nice blue suit whilst remaining delicately poised, like pollen blown on the draughts of air coming from the hand-driers in the bags.

Simon Fay Glossop

Deadbeat descendant

Three questions. Are you really sure that Raw Coltrane is John Coltrane's son? (*The Wire* 176)? Don't you think more research should be done on this hot and

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 45–46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF, or fax 0171 287 4767, or e-mail the_wire@ukonline.co.uk. Please include a full name and address. Every letter published wins a FREE CD

important topic? Maybe some thorough genetic analysis like what Bill Clinton got for the stain on the dress? You deserve a massive point deduction for your heavy-handed treatment of the younger Coltrane. Anyone care to listen to the music?

Mits Jacobson Boston, USA

To the core

Your 100 Records list (*The Wire* 175) may have exposed my ignorance of music (I only own two of them!) but it does give me a chance to show off some of my other knowledge: Russell Mills, in his enchanting piece on Silver Apples, presumes that their name was inspired by the Morton Subotnick composition *Silver Apples Of The Moon*. This may be true. But it's also possible that they found the name in the same place that Subotnick did, which is the final verse of WB Yeats's poem *The Song Of Wandering Aengus*. What this has to do with any of the referenced music, I have no idea.

Patrick MacArde Berkeley, USA

Byrd on a wire

It's nice to see that I'm not the only one who still remembers Joseph Byrd and *The United States Of America* (100 Records, *The Wire* 175). However, besides his arranging and conducting work on Ry Cooder's *Jazz*, Byrd did make two other albums: *A Christmas Yet To Come* (1975) and *Yonkoke Transcendental* (1976), both on Takoma. Fine albums (and nice covers, to boot) which present electronic renditions of a traditional repertoire, adding new insights into Byrd's work. Plus, they sport a nicely detailed and pioneering use of electronics. (A 260D and early Oberheim equipment) lovers of analogue synthesis will have a field day!

Giuseppe Coll Corinto, Italy

Northern exposure

Thanks for an informative Primer on musique concrète and electroacoustics (*The Wire* 174). Worth mentioning in addition is Norwegian composer Arne Nordheim's work from the late 60s on *Electric*, recently reissued on the Rune Grammofon label. Nordheim went to work at Wawrzyn's Studio Experimenterne (Polish radio), where the 'electroacoustic scene' merged the German and French 'schools' into a distinct language. And even more good news: a remix CD of *Electric*, by Biosphere and Death Prod, is scheduled for release later this autumn. **Havard Ness** Bergen, Norway

Down Rova

In response to your review of Rova's performance at the LCM's Seventh Annual Festival of Experimental Music (*The Wire* 173) I guess the life of professional critics has its down days just like anybody else, and that must mean being forced to stay and listen to several days of music when they would rather hysterically rush for the exits. For the record, if 'mad and true' means performing in London every ten years, then we are guilty as charged. We think it important to note that the composition/improvisation using cue cards to signal written material that Biba Kopf found so 'creatively bankrupt' was entitled *Witch Gong Game* and was composed by Barry Guy. We also performed the lovely piece *Face In A Crowd* by Lindsay Cooper.

Jon Raskin, Rova Saxophone Quartet Oakland, USA

Flight of fancy

Edwin Pouncey's review of Frank Zappa's *Mystery Disc* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 176) sent me searching my record collection for Captain Beefheart's 'Metal Man Has Won His Wings'. I was suffering from the influence of others' mishearing of the title. After finding my copy of the bootleg *Metal Man Has Homer's Wings*, featuring this very track, recorded in 1963 or 1964 by The Sonts, and featuring both Beefheart and Zappa, it was time for some attentive listening to some very unclear vocals. I'm now convinced you got it right: there are no 'homer's wings' audible, which should be no surprise to anyone. I have to say this is one forgettable track, and should have been left in the basement where it was found. Both Zappa and Beefheart would be long forgotten if this was the best they could do.

Paul Nuttall Wellington, New Zealand

Sticky subject

I'm glad that you recommended *Mouse On Mars's* *Glam* album in your last issue (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 176), but in addition to it being a beautiful piece of work, it (my copy at least) smells of the lushest toffee imaginable — I could happily shift the album for entertainment in a power cut (maybe a slight exaggeration).

The Col feature (same issue) was welcome until I found that their autumn single had already sold out — a new occurrence. I hold you responsible.

Richard Faith via e-mail

Correction

Issue 176 in the Directory, the e-mail address for VWM should have read: vwm@zen.co.uk

18 (WITH A BULLET!) FROM SHELLSHOCK DISTRIBUTION...

CALIFONE 'CALIFONE'

(FLYADIOS)

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(FLYADIOS)

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V. MAJESTIC 'MAJESTIC'

(FLYADIOS)

Mode Island's website tread the fine line between psychobabble and psychotic. Mixing up guitar, quick recessions, and breakbeats. In effect, becoming the scientific processes and motions of the cold to which you are now subject. Good stuff.

THE OLIVIA TRENOR CONTROL '16 BLACK SWAN NETWORK'

(FLYADIOS)

The vinyl version of this release was sold during a 1997 tour with The Apples in Stereo. Available on the CD for all to enjoy with a little rechristening... for dancing.

ROBBOBS 'REMEMBRANCE'

(FLYADIOS/GRIMM)

Incredible improvisations from Japanese American collaboration. Live in the studio, no overdubs, pro-on-the-dot. Atmospheric loops play live systems of the Garage on 25th and 2nd of November.

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(FLYADIOS)

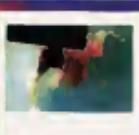
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PETER BLEGVAD 'HARMONIN' BILL (RECOMMENDED)

(FLYADIOS)

Darkly whimsical and elongated new songs built on Bill's unique guitar. Annexed by his wife Shelly Rappaport, Anna, The Golden Palominos and Michael Stipe, backed by the dynamic Chris Cutler. John Cale's presence is felt.



EX-CRITIQUE 'MOVING SOLVED EVERYTHING'

(FLYADIOS/UNION)

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GUARD 'BRIGHTNESS'

(FLYADIOS/HIMAWARI/POWERGOL)

Massive multi-movement operas from the 80's specialists in sonic oddities. John Cage meets Julian Priester. On tour with Nanciso.



GLENN BRANCA 'SYMPHONY NO. 1'

(FLYADIOS)

Produced by Lou Reed, this is the first CD issue of the classic 1986 work which sold over 10,000 copies. The 16 movements responsible for the astonishing performances of feedback guitars and primal rhythms include Lou Reed, Thurston Moore and members of Liquid Liquid, Krank and Garage Lovers.



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New Jersey band who make up a stereo with random cuts, ambient off-tunes, noisy guitar trills and the occasional rap. The weird spaces from the unusual to grotesque sound abstractions. This is fantastic visceral stuff. Like a house, very unpredictable and dense. Rockin' Proof. The Way YPF.



22-PISTERPKKO 'ELEVEN'

(FLYADIOS)

22-Pisterpko had been the far north of Finland, and their music is quite unique. It resembles modern hip hop, but with a very heavy, dark, and heavy feel. The title track is a mix of 80's pop, but also contains traces of the Swedish Pranksters, Death, Thriller, Metal and more. November 12th. Vinyl, Post, CD, Lp, Cassette, Gorge, Mail Order/Perfekte Anno.



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THE STYREMES 'ALL THE WRONG PEOPLE ARE DOING IT'

(FLYADIOS)

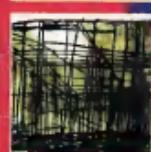
Legendary UK art-rock band The Styremes made their mark on the edge of the Electric Café under their first UN with the October Performance One on the Mary-Louise Hobbs show last month and are currently gigging in the UK.



V/A 'NEW YORK THROBBING'

(FLYADIOS)

Legendary early 80's underground punk band New York Throbbing. CD As Far As I'm Concerned. New York Throbbing 24 tracks from 12, tracks, including Art Brutus, The Beads, Sage, Adoration, SLE, Undead, Fable, Peppermint Frost, Punk and many more. A definitive document of New York Punk's most formative period.



JUREAN 'JU-JAM'

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New Jersey band who make up a stereo with random cuts, ambient off-tunes, noisy guitar trills and the occasional rap. The weird spaces from the unusual to grotesque sound abstractions. This is fantastic visceral stuff. Like a house, very unpredictable and dense. Rockin' Proof. The Way YPF.



22-PISTERPKKO 'ELEVEN (REMIXES)' 'ELEVEN (MIXES)'

(FLYADIOS)

22-Pisterpko had been the far north of Finland, and their music is quite unique. It resembles modern hip hop, but with a very heavy, dark, and heavy feel. The title track is a mix of 80's pop, but also contains traces of the Swedish Pranksters, Death, Thriller, Metal and more. November 12th. Vinyl, Post, CD, Lp, Cassette, Gorge, Mail Order/Perfekte Anno.

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Newband perform Harry Partch

American Pioneers

As part of Inverting America, London's Barbican continues its series of concerts from the canon of Stateside "innovators, rule breakers and iconoclasts". This month's highlights include a specially arranged music programme by Glenn Branca and his Electric Guitar Swarm group (31 October), while earlier on the same day there are free performances by Ben Neill/Page Hamilton, and Marc Ribot. In a triplet of classic Minimalism, John Adams conducts the UK premiere of his *Piano Concerto* (1 November). Philip Glass supervises his Ginsberg-influenced Hydrogen Jukebox (23), and The City Of London Sinfonia play Steve Reich's Desert Music and orchestral Frank Zappa (26). Henry Rollins delivers a spoken word trade (9), and Newband set up Harry Partch's original instruments (27). Finally, Minimalist grandaddy La Monte Young directs his Theatre Of Eternal Music Brass And String Ensemble for the first time on British soil (1 December). For full details, call 0171 638 8891. In addition, Mark Weber's parallel season of underground American film continues at the Lux Cinema between 1-8 November; call 0171 684 0201.

Now Ninety8

In the second of *The Wire's* Adventures In Modern Music nights as part of this Nottingham multimedia festival, we host an array of vanguard live Electronica To Rococo Rot, Rhys Chatham, Pluramon, and a special film soundtrack by Radioboy aka Matt Herbert (Nottingham Matt Cross, 1 November, 7pm, £6/£4). Meanwhile, Digital Glubbing hooks up a live Net jam between Carl Craig in Detroit and 4 Hero (The Bomb, 30 October), and Kaffe Matthews plays her brand of live sampling Ambient (Angel Row Gallery, 4 November). For details on the whole programme, call 0115 941 9419. Website: www.nowfestival.org.uk

Oris London Jazz Festival

The usual galaxy of international jazzers and World Musicians will be descending on the capital for this year's concert extravaganza, which takes place at various locations including the South Bank Centre and Barbican (6-17 November). Blasting off with a drum-centric performance by The Art Ensemble's Lester Bowie and South African drum ambassador Louis Moholo (7 November), you can also hear fusion pioneer Chick Corea (7), acclaimed Brazilian vocalist Virginia Rodrigues (9), punk jazz iconoclast Billy Jenkins improvising film accompaniments (10), Evan Parker with London Saxophonics (11), and John McLaughlin (11). The LMC present three 'Nurs Das Brus', featuring Phil Minton Noel Akchote, Erik Minkenken, Caroline Kraabel, John Edwards and Mark Sanders (The Spitz, 6-8). Also in town will be Joshua Redman, Joe Lovano, Ger Allien Nitin Sawhney, John Surman, Cheb Mami, Alex Balanescu and more. Info line: 0171 405 5974

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

This year celebrating 21 years of frosty 20th century music on the good people of Huddersfield, the festival's special guests include US heavyweights George Crumb, Elliott Carter, Steve Reich and Terry Riley. Highlights include the installation House (a collaboration between poet Simon Armitage, Scanner and theatre designer Louise and Wils Wilson), the UK premiere of Tan Dun's opera Marco Polo (22 November), Terry Riley and bassist Stefano Saracibbio in improvising mode (28), New and performing Harry Partch (29) and Steve Reich and Benji Krotz's new video opera *Hindenburg* (29). Huddersfield (various venues), 18-29 November. Box Office: 01484 430528

Planet Tree Festival

Contemporary tonal music is the theme of this London festival (4-20 November). The highlights will

undoubtedly be the rarely performed four-hour Morton Feldman chamber piece *For Philip Guston* (played by John Tilbury, Dorothy Stone and Simon Allen), and a solo piano recital by Terry Riley (20). Other nights include a tribute to Erik Satie (4), festival organiser Lawrence Ball's *Music + Space/Sing/Pay* (7), Riley keyboard music played by John Tilbury (11), Yonty Solomon performing piano music by Ives and Soraya (13), and the hyperdense piano music of Keith Barnard (18). Concerts take place at London's Conney Hall, Burgh House and Rudolf Steiner House, call 0171 420 1000 for tickets.

Termitze Festival

Leeds's long running Improv venue hosts a three night scream-up, with noise from Costes, Acidfuck, Death Squad, Radiosonde and Chapter 23 (6 November), electroacoustics from Michael Prime, Geert Heyens, Project DARK and Jownow Productions (7), and Termitze stalwarts Beck/Hesson/Felt plus Helmut Lemke, John Jesnoch and Rob Darton (8). Leeds Royal Park, CJs and Fenton, info 0113 275 6802

Ballroom International

Strange title for this weekend rock/Electronica clash in Berlin, organised by Berlin's Kmy-Yo and City Sung label (28-29 November). On the Saturday, Tarwater Couch, Ryot Ikeda, Pole, Sia, Prohibition and Peaches & Wolfstein play live, with DJing from *The Wire* Sound System and DJ Bleed. Sunday's performers are Sebadoh, To Rococo Rot, Kanne, Laub, Phoneheads and Vienna, with deckinning from Roye & Clyde, DJ Manic and Hybrid. Berlin Volksbuhne, info 00 49 30 283 914 50, or e-mail kty-yo@berlin.netwurf.de

Total Music Meeting

Still in Berlin, the excellent FMP organisation host their regular Improv meetings (4-8 November), including Louis Sclavis, Jean-Marc Montere, King Ubu Orchestra, Masha Mengelberg, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Matthew Shipp, Vinko Globokar and more. Berlin Podewil, info 00 49 30 394 1756 fax 00 49 30 394 2502

Music Unlimited

This year music meeting in Wels, Austria celebrates the interzone where jazz collides with post-rock and fractured noise. Appearing over three days are The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Ken Vandermark's OKV Trio, Tied & Tickled Trio, Techno Animal, Calixico, Hamid Drake, Leo Smith, Richard Teitelbaum & Gurli Müller and more. Wels Alter Schlachthof, 6-8 November, info 00 43 7242 56375, e-mail: wasachschlachthof@pvt.telenet.at □

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RONIN RO
**HAVE GUN
WILL TRAVEL**
THE SPECTACULAR RISE AND
VIOLENT FALL OF
DEATH ROW
RECORDS

bites

Rob Mazurek

Chicago's silent revolution

Chicago's avant scene is a vast polymusical collective that periodically gets into smaller units, like Gato Del Sol, Tortoise, Tortage 217, Chicago Underground Orchestra, Directors, Pullman, Brokeback, Super ESP...

The scene might be characterised by its limitless permutations from a tight pool of players, but one name in particular crops up over and over — Rob Mazurek. As yet, outside Chicago he's still mostly known as a solid songwriter and accomplished comet player in the hard bop tradition. His three records on the Dutch Hip label invite comparison with the Blue Note classics of Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard. However, Mazurek has all but shed his hard bop skin, as his forthcoming projects confirm. "It's certainly not bad music," the soft spoken Mazurek says of his earlier work. "It's just music that's trying to sound like something else. Whereas, in all the new stuff I'm doing, I'm trying to go with what I hear in my head and let that dictate what the music is. I feel like I'm finally making music that means a lot."

Mazurek's claim is borne out by the marvelous new Thrill Jockey release, *12 Of Freedom*, recorded with percussionist Chad Taylor under the name Chicago Underground Duo, and the even more out-there Chicago Underground Trio CD forthcoming from Delmark. The duo disc opens with expressional peaks, smears and ripples of brass sent out into the surrounding void. The second track bears no trace of Mazurek's comet, only pedaled and slowly alternating piano and

vibe tones that pierce the silence and then retreat back into it. "Mononoke Feldman has been my major influence in the last three or four years," Mazurek explains. "The way he constructs things is sublime. Coming out of the background that I have, it's hard to break that mould of wanting to play a lot of notes. It's a battle just to try! The idea of thinking about where you're going to play colours within the time you're playing — that's so important to me now, because I'm trying to get the music to be as introspective as possible, in, hopefully, a spiritual way."

Feldman's angular minimalism is also discernible on the trio record. But more striking is the glimpse it offers of Mazurek's newfound interest in electronic music. "Teletransportation Unit 3", for example, recalls Sun Ra's early 60s compositions, with its wavering sci-fi Moog assisted by organ drones and vibraphone accents. Mazurek himself sees a link with several masters of electronic composition. "I don't really consider myself a real 'trumpet player', I'm just interested in sounds," he says. "And I think that's what the next record's going to be — a solo thing that's almost all electronic. If I play the comet, you might not be able to tell!"

What accounts for this sudden shift in emphasis? Mazurek attributes it to his friendship with Tortoise guitarist Jeff Parker, who introduced him to Chicago's experimental network. With Parker, Mazurek began hosting a series of weekly workshops that gradually

coalesced into a quintet oddly dubbed Chicago Underground Orchestra. "It doesn't have to be 50 or 100 people for it to be an orchestra," Mazurek explains, alluding to a remark by Cecil Taylor associate Bill Dixon. "Each player is an orchestra unto themselves because they're responsible for all the things that an orchestra would be responsible for, rather than the normal thing where you're a horn player and so you play the melody or solo, or you're a drummer and so you keep time."

The Orchestra's debut, *Playground*, is a rich and accomplished record, even if it doesn't quite bear out the "orchestra" concept. "It's a pretty regular record," Mazurek confesses. "Conceptually speaking, it doesn't go as far as we wanted to take it." The duo and trio releases, however, provide ample evidence of Mazurek's new direction. Mazurek adds mischievously that Parker has begun another group also called Chicago Underground Trio. "That's the whole concept to use the same name for all these different projects." **CHRISTOPH COX** Chicago Underground Duo's *12 Of Freedom* is out now on Thrill Jockey

Kaija Saariaho

Shivering timbres

Often billed as 'The Lonely Finn', Kaija Saariaho is one of the leading composers of the post-Stockhausen generation. Certainly there's a coolness, an emotional detachment in her music that is very Finnish. But 'singleminded' would be a better description of a career dedicated to combining live instrumental resources and Ircam-inspired electronics. From Helsinki she moved to Freiburg, Germany, to study with Brian Ferneyhough, and then to Paris — and each of these musical worlds is reflected in her music.

The desire to work at Ircam precipitated her move at the end of her student days. "I started to work with computers in 1982," she says. "Then, the situation was a bit unusual. When you wanted to do something more advanced, you needed a very big computer... Now, most of the work I'm interested in I can do at home." The swimming Sir Apelles Gardini for percussion and electronics, on her latest CD *Private Gardens*, was created on her own Mac, using recordings of instruments (like) in Japan. A series of impressions of gardens she visited in Kyoto, it's her tribute to Toyo Takemitsu.

Saariaho's soundworlds range from captivating textures of the utmost delicacy and refinement — reflecting a French concern with sonority and timbre — to the more industrial end of New Complexity. *Io* for chamber orchestra, tape and live electronics, realised in 1986-87 at Ircam, is a tough, gritty listen, while the exquisite *Imaginary Gardini* is at the opposite end of the spectrum. She focuses more often on timbre and memory than gesture and drama.

"The most interesting thing for me at Ircam at this moment is their spatialisation program," she comments,

Rob Mazurek (right) with Chad Taylor in Chicago Underground Duo.



"which is a new way to make use of our knowledge of how sound is moving and changing in space." She used this program in Conn, for soprano and electronics (also on *Private Gardens*). "In a concert there are several loudspeakers around the audience, and they create a changing space which I find really interesting. You cannot hear the electronic sounds as coming from the speakers. You really experience a new kind of space, which is constantly transformed around you."

Saario admits she's a modernist: "I cannot understand the postmodern collage technique," she asserts. "It's not for me. I would like all the music that I write to come through me, so that I filter it." But she rejects any New Complexity affiliation: "I cannot stand these labels!" Certainly her music doesn't have the visceral, emotional intensity of the Ferneyhough-Finney-Dillon axis. 'Complex tendencies' is a more tentative description, but maybe it's best just to refer to 'contemporary modernism'.

'Specularia' is a description Saario is happier with. She uses computer analysis to produce harmonic structures out of sound spectra — preferably with patched instrumental sounds as the basis, since environmental sounds are too complex. "My harmonic structures are rather simple," she says. Relatively speaking, of course: "Noise physically would be, for example, wind, meaning that there is no harmonic spectrum." But sometimes she has environmental or natural sounds in her music. "It can be a component of creating more musical tensions, of different kinds of levels of contrast, and so on." A favoured technique involves resolving from noise to pitched harmonics, step by step.

Like Jonathan Harvey — the composer perhaps closest in outlook to Saario — she favours the combination of live instruments and electronics. "I enjoy working with musicians — what they bring cannot really be replaced. On the other hand, I see the electronic part of my music these days as somehow extensions of the instruments, but it depends always on the work. I make many works with no electronics at all." Examples include *Lacrimose De L'Aile* for solo flute, enriched by hissing, sung and spoken sounds.

Finally there's the fact that she's a Finnish composer,

steeped in the music of Sibelius — "such a self-evident part of our musical culture," she says. But it's something she had to get away from. There's the music itself with cool, clear textures. "Our location is very special, and especially the light condition." Maybe this explains her liking for "grey sounds contrasting with very bright, clean sounds". Luminous greyness and clarity — the search for opposites. **ANDY HAMILTON** *Private Gardens* is out now on Online: *The Complete Record Co* are reissuing Saario's back catalogue.

Thomas Fehlmann

Berlin connection

Spanning 20 years, Thomas Fehlmann's career connects with some unlikely points on the electronic music diaspora. His chronology links the early systems music of Robert Fripp, the rhythm-physics of Detroit Techno, and the ganja space dubs of The Orb and Sun Electric among others. More often a ghost presence than a 'face' on the scene, he is one of the diaspora's most valuable fixers.

After 20 years helping make other people's music happen, Berlin-based Fehlmann has finally released his debut solo LP, *Flow 90-98*. Recorded between engagements over the last eight years, the LP showcases Fehlmann, in his own words, "experimenting and trying new approaches, doing things you're not always able to do when you are with other people".

While not exactly revolutionising Electronica, *Flow 90-98* is a beautiful and accomplished review of its possibilities. It takes in the melodic chimes and sighs of 'Hermosa' (Black Dog in outer space), the brooding electronic dub of 'Banda', and the bittersweet clarity of 'Face The Day', which sounds like one of Juan Atkins's finest moments. 'Schizophrenia', which features his longtime collaborator Moritz Von Oswald (aka Maurooo, of Basic Channel fame), closes the album in a cumulus of gorgeous synth textures.

The idea to finally release a solo album came last year, after Fehlmann and friends from Berlin's Ambient Ocean Club started a radio show. "Before that, my collection of tracks was just growing and growing — I wasn't planning to put out an LP or anything," says Fehlmann. "But on the radio show we'd play some Hawaiian record next to Phaid, and thought that I got to see how you can sequence different styles together, and just play the bits of records you liked."

A meeting with Robert Fripp in Hamburg in the late 70s inspired Fehlmann to form Palais Schaumburg with Holger Hiller. Though they experimented with tape loops and early sampling techniques, their motivation differed from UK sound saboteurs like Cabaret Voltaire. Fehlmann explains, in that Schaumburg were "not issue-political, but artistic-political. We set ourselves certain aims. For instance, if our music started

remind us of anything else, we had to scrap it".

Fehlmann was upset when Hiller chose to leave straight after the release of their first LP. "When we started the band, it was like a marriage," he says, "and if someone was doing something outside the band you would almost feel betrayed. But working within the electronic field I began to see the music as project based, rather than group based, so collaboration with outsiders was something to be pleased about."

Moving to Berlin in 1988, Fehlmann teamed up again with his former Schaumburg colleague, Moritz von Oswald. It was a good time to be in Berlin, the Wall was about to come down and the first wave of Detroit Techno was beginning to break in Berlin clubs.

"Palais Schaumburg were always dance music, we were very influenced by disco," he says. "So this music was a dream come true, it had these sexy beats but without having shit music on the top. It was tufftum."

Early champions of Detroit, Fehlmann and Von Oswald started collaborating with Motor City pioneers

like Blake Baxter, Eddie "Flashin' Foulkes and the original Underground Resistance duo of Jeff Mills and Mike Banks. Fehlmann introduced the UR duo to their heroes Kraftwerk during a tour to Berlin in 1991.

"That night Jeff was playing at Tresor and Ralf and Florian came down to hear him," recalls Fehlmann. "They connected straight away; they'd never heard anything like Jeff. It was an amazing moment, and Mike said to me, 'This is the closest I ever came to God.'

Despite his close relationship with UR, Fehlmann distances himself from the German producers they inspired. Moving to the opposite extreme, he began working with Alex Paterson in The Orb and FWD!, an Orb spin-off project also featuring Robert Fripp. "I never heard hammering Techno," asserts Fehlmann. "It was like everything was possible again with Ambient. I like extreme music, but not hard music. If you listen to Neu! or Can, it's extreme, but it's not hard. Innovators like UR were good but I hate the clones."

As 3MB, Fehlmann and Von Oswald worked with Juan Atkins on *Jazz Is The Teacher*. Atkins was so impressed with the duo's "precision" that he recorded his first Model 500 LP at Von Oswald's studio.

"The precision comes from our German-ness," laughs Fehlmann. "The Orb always take the piss out of me because of it, but they love it as well. But I also like the element of chance in music, and I try to have my studio set up so that unexpected things can happen."

His studio method mirrors his approach to life, where music makes sense of the unknown. "When I went to Detroit it was a real education because it made me realise that everything I'd ever thought is relative," he says. "But then I meet these people from a completely different background and we connect. It made me realise what a great communication factor music is."

MIKE SMALLCROSS How 90-98 is out now on Apollo

Maher Shalal Hash Baz

Idiots avant

"I like non-musically music," grins Ton Kudo. "All of our drummers were passers-by. Before we played live, I would go into the street, stop the first person I saw and ask them to play the drums." Alongside his wife Reiko, Ton has been responsible for some of the strangest, all-out primitive musical sonorities to emerge from Japan. From their early duo performances as Noise in the late 70s, to Ton's current idiot-avant ensemble, Maher Shalal Hash Baz, they've maintained a constant presence on the Tokyo underground.

Surveying the West from eight miles high, Maher Shalal were born out of a biblical epiphany. Close in atmosphere to Allen Ginsberg's harmonium lullabies, Ton and Reiko's music is variously intense, exhilarating and beautifully spooked, ebbing in sources as diverse as Syd Barrett, Roland Kirk, The Godz and The Shaggs.



Their recent triple CD set, *Return Visit To Rock Mass*, blew away any preconceived ideas about a "Tokyo sound". No Blue Cheer hearkens or 'Frisco Ballroom' freakin here — instead you get around 80 contemplative pocket symphonies, compounded from beat-up acoustic strings and bubbling brass. *Rock Mass* is both a personal peak for the Kudos, and the summation of 20 years underground activity.

They trace their underground route back to Tokyo's legendary Minor club in the late 70s. "It was unbelievable," Ton enthuses, "a magnet for any people interested in the new kind of music, like Keiji Haino. All these musicians who had begun to gather there inevitably began to form bands."

Fired by the clubs' intense atmosphere, Ton formed the short-lived Machine Gun Tango and played regular duo dates with Haino. When Haino began to concentrate on his group Fushitsusha, the Kudos formed Noise in 1979, with Ton playing "Sister Ray" style organ behind Reiko's guitar, trumpet, howls and whispers, releasing one LP in 1980 (recently reissued on CD by Pataphysique).

After a brief immersion in New York's Lower East Side loft scene, Ton returned to Tokyo. His desire for spontaneous freeform rock 'n' roll found release through an ever proliferating number of groups and collaborations, among them his Suicide tribute outfit,

Toko Suade, and his most extreme non-musician project, Sweet Inspirations.

Recalling the absurdity of the latter project, Ton gags. "I had to play a chord, then put my finger on the correct fret for the bassist, then hit the drums and cymbals with my guitar neck... boom, chick, boom. We didn't play many concerts because we could never play a song twice. We never rehearsed." Reiko, meanwhile, was now doing solo performances, her voicings occasionally augmented by the utterances of the newborn son who was strapped to her back (as can be heard on her solo *CD Fire Inside My Heart*).

Meanwhile after a brief stint playing acid-drenched folk alongside Che Muks in Che-SHIZU (now on PSFL), Ton entered a heavy political phase. He toured Japan playing traditional folk music for Japanese minorities like Hokkaido's Ainu people. He also fell in with Kenichi Takeda's A-Musk, a collective modelled on Chris Cutler's Rock In Opposition initiative (and not to be confused with the Cologne label of the same name).

However, A-Musk's political stance went way beyond a commitment to free improvisation. Ton reveals, "We had been supporting this political group called the Eastern Asia Anti-Japanese Armed Front. Then they made an attempt on the Japanese Emperor's life. Most of them are in jail now."

"They exploded a train carrying the Emperor, but they missed him," Reiko continues. "They all got arrested. Ton was a supporter, but he was not directly involved in the attempt. He didn't make bombs or that kind of thing. But A-Musk and associated musicians were investigated."

Eventually Ton became disillusioned with political activities and gave up on his dream of "dissolving all national boundaries" after experiencing a religious conversion. "I began to read the Bible," he says, "and it said that when God's kingdom comes all borders will be destroyed. So I knew I could stop fighting."

DAVID KEENAN *Return Visit To Rock Mass* is out now on Org

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fast tracks

Quick fire interviews with musicians in the news



Negativland

A recent announcement on the Net read, "The career of recording artists Negativland may be over", because your pressing plant held up

manufacturing your new CD, as a consequence of new guidelines on sample clearance which encourage US pressing plants to police new releases for unclued samples. Isn't this statement a little over-dramatic?

Don Joyce: Not our words. We do suggest that if pressing plants continue to follow the gross view that any work with any unauthorised samples in it just gets dumped to avoid any possible problems, we may still find it difficult to press our work.

How does the 1976 US Copyright Act define 'Fair Use' of a sample?

'Fair Use' was a concept originally appearing in the US Constitution where our founding fathers first provided for the establishment of US copyright protections. Copyright is declared to be a 'limited right', and may be entirely set aside if the 'infringer' is making use of the protected work for parody, commentary, criticism, or other educational use. These uses are specifically defined as 'Fair Use' and do not necessarily require permission, clearance rights, or fees to the owner of any kind. The wisdom is simple: how many parodies or exposes would ever get made if permission from the subject of the criticism was required first? Culture would become lame, toothless.

Now that collage has entered mass marketed music, we suddenly have music 'owners' trying to prevent all this 'stealing' from happening unless they get to approve the use and get paid for the usage. We claim our collages to be Fair Use, both because we would not be granted permission to do this critical stuff, and it would be impossible to create this kind of work when we're using hundreds of fragments for which we would need to somehow locate and pay each and every owner, if they all approved of our use in the first place. Any form of elaborate collage becomes impossible in that kind of climate.

It's always easy to spot which is which, bootleg or creative re-use, but this is a clear distinction now missing from the laws. The US Constitution states that the reason for copyright laws is 'to promote the creation of new work'. That's what we want too. All kinds. Free of charge and free of charges.

How long do you think this kind of legislation can hold out against the plethora of sampling devices and home-taping formats?

We hope for legislative change, for changes in legal

interpretations, and most of all for a public acceptance of the cultural usefulness of collage. I think we're better at lobbying the music consumer than [lobbyists in Washington], so that's what we do. We are trying to make our point by example.

Where do you go from here, and will your next album be coming out soon?

We finally did get the offending record pressed and it's

now out. We pressed it at a new place that either wasn't paying attention or didn't care. But who knows, if the RIAA [Recording Industry Association of America] continues its intimidation campaign in such a gross and undifferentiated way, by the time we return to this presser he may have become paranoid too. We'll see [Interview Rob Young. For further developments, see Negativland's Website: www.negativland.com]

DAF

Platz have just released DAF's ur-Techno trilogy from the early 80s. Why now? Is it your silver jubilee?

Gaby (Deltaplano Lovers) [Mute boss]: Daniel Miller was always interested in the DAF catalogue. Mute's first LP was *Der Klonen Und Die Rosen*. When the rights came available for the Virgin albums, Mute bought them.

In 1981-82, they were the ultimate machine sex music. Do they stand up, post-Techno?

DAF were like the godfathers of Techno and EBM [Electronic Body Music]. For a lot of people DAF is part of their history. Robert [Gert, drummer/composer] and I have done other things since

DAF (Germany lasted 1.5 months, then where Party over. How did it feel the morning after?

It wasn't that exhausting! I travelled a lot, released a solo album [*Distress*], and in 1985 met Robert again to make *First Step To Heaven*, a sort of disco DAF album.

So much for roseate. When you split, didn't you urge more groups to quit gracefully?

No. Sometimes you have to disappoint your listeners. I also do DJing, and it really draws you to watch the same people on the dancefloor for two hours, so you deliberately play a record they won't like. Old crowd goes, new crowd comes in. The same goes for music. People ask, 'Why don't you get "Der Mussolini" remixed?' I turn down offers to remix at least once a month. That way is nostalgia, so we gave them DAF as disco brothers instead.

It wasn't because you missed DAF's success?

No. More important than the time is the money. On a major we sold a lot; I only need to sell 20 per cent as many on my own to make the same.

Why the continuing fascination with 'Der Mussolini' [en Alle! Ist Gut!?

It's the fascination of fascism. The song is still powerful because it still teases that taboo. But the German situation now is different than 1980.

Better or worse?

Different. In 1980 there was no big night wing movement in Germany. I now live in East Berlin, where there is potential for right wing ideas to take hold. I'm not sure I would write that song the same way now.

How do DAF's LPs sound to you now?

Any new record sounds better because the technology is better. DAF records sound more powerful in people's memories than reality. In their time, they were really powerful.

Surely the power of music is about more than quality sound?

Of course. In terms of composition and lyrics, DAF were unique. DAF was very free music. DAF music doesn't care about song structures, harmonies, instrumentation, nothing. DAF is how it comes out of the machine.

Did a DAF song ever use more than 20 words?

No. It was necessary to use as few words as possible. Why water the wine? You can't play around much in German, because it is very precise. So why not use best features? Make it as short, precise and imperative as you can, with as many consonants as and as few syllables as possible.

What is DAF DOS?

DAF reinterpreted in Berlin Techno style as a one off CD by me and my new partner, Wotan.

How did Robert Görl feel about it?

He didn't like it much. Thus DAF DOS, not from the Spanish, but from MS-DOS. DAF DOS is a new system for an old program. Interview Chris Bahn. DAF's cock catalogue is ressued on Mute.



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Puglia

When Jason and the Argonauts approached Crete, their entry to the port was blocked by Talos, a man of bronze, hurling huge rocks down from them on the cliffs. The last of his bronze race, Talos had been appointed by Zeus to guard the Isle of Europa. But he had an Achilles heel — a common complaint in the world of Greek myth, it seems — which the sorceress Medea exploited. Unravelled by her incantations, he struck his ankle — his only vulnerable point — against a stone and died to death. These events are depicted on the monumental and very beautiful Talos vase in the Jatta Museum in Ruvo di Puglia. The vase's artwork was executed by the "Talos Painter" working in Athens in the last quarter of the fifth century BC. Such riches found their way to Roman Italy, and the museum is packed almost randomly with remnants of the treasure trove from the ancient necropolis of Ruvo, discovered in the last century.

Perhaps Talos passed down his Achilles heel to the music festival named after him. The region of Puglia, appropriately, is the heel of Southern Italy — the town of Ruvo is in the Achilles tendon bit, to be precise. It's off the usual tourist route, and I didn't see any English all the time I was there. A prosperous region of southern Italy, Puglia is the centre of olive oil production —

Evan Parker

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

indeed, I'm told, in the first year of the festival musicians were paid in kind, and this year Evan Parker could be observed with a large quantity of extra virgin, secreted in his hand luggage on the return journey.

To call Talos a jazz festival doesn't do justice to either the Italian conception of the music or the stylistic range on display. Its organiser is leading jazz trumpeter and composer Pino Minnifa, who is a Pugliese himself. The format was divided between solo concerts in the Sala Politecnico and more genre-crossing open air events later in the evening in the Piazza Cattedrale. Solo saxophone was the theme for the Sala, with Steve Lacy's concert a highlight, his huge tone on soprano dominating the intimate setting. You'd get an idea of his programme from the fine recent album *Live At Unity Temple* (reviewed in *The Wire* 175). "Little Robbie Toome" had real multiphonics for the train whistle, which Monk could only hint at on piano. Lacy's original compositions have a haku-like density and compression, and "The Crust" was only humorous. It's many years since he has visited Britain — "The phone call never comes," he said afterwards. Any promoters reading this, please note.

Evan Parker's circular breathing tour de force on soprano was equally breathtaking, if you'll excuse the pun. He says he doesn't decide which saxophone to take until leaving the house, though I can see that a tenor as hand luggage could be a problem. The venue's excellent acoustic gave a unique insight into the saxophonist's approach: intensity and dynamics rise and fall hypnotically, the tempo increasing until individual notes barely register. The kind of music that takes you over and immerses you in its waves of sound.

We know about Evan, of course. Less known will be multi-instrumentalist Eugenio Colombo, member of the celebrated Instabile Orchestra. His solo set explored some exotic devices, including pelig scales and sapp tonguing — indeed, he performed Monk's "Ask Me Now" on pannarica. But French saxophonist Louis Sclavis's performance confirmed my earlier feelings — all technique and not much music. The same applied to his band's performance later that evening of *Les Violences De Rameau*, their ECM album from last year.

Italian jazz has always had a special lyricism and cogness, but in recent years there's been a more self-conscious exploration of folk roots. Reeds player

Garibaldi Trovesi — who appeared recently at the Bath Festival, a rare British visit for an Italian jazz musician — is a leading exponent of this tendency. His two featured self-confessed folk artists Riccardo Teri on organetto — a kind of accordion — and Patrice Valliant on virtuoso mandolin, a new one to me. If Trovesi often made reference to the forms of Early Music, the folk borrowings of Pino Minnifa's own ensemble were both more diverse and indirect; his explorations ranging from South American tango to North African music. Minnifa is the genius behind the postmodern masterpiece *Sudov*, and updated compositions from this 1995 album were featured in his Sud Ensemble's concert in the Piazza Cattedrale.

Pierre Favre's Singing Drums too were strong on polyrhythmic interplay and awkward time signatures. But unfortunately the weather intervened for the first time in the history of the festival — that, I guess, was its Achilles heel. Rain fell dramatically on the Antonello Salas/Sandro Salta duo, interrupting their lyrical, freeheeling explorations on piano/accordion and alto sax. On piano, Salas proved to be an extraordinary post-Cecil Taylor stylist.

But perhaps the most ambitious exploration of folk roots has been the Banda project, which recently resulted in the remarkable *Lo Banda* album (Enja), dedicated this year to the Castel Dell'Orso, symbol of the presence of Frederick II of Sicily in the region. In southern Italy the banda, or wind band, popularised opera among the rural poor — it's said Verdi became a national hero on the back of banda performances round the Italian regions. Here, they collaborated with local jazz musicians, but the banda also had its own "dirty" sound, like the early New Orleans ensembles, when performing folk arrangements.

The festival, amazingly, is free. The indoor recitals appealed more to the cognoscenti, while the large open-air audience weren't always up for attentive listening, as Pino Minnifa's appeals showed. But I couldn't help thinking that with music as 'free' as this in the other sense of the word, UK audiences would have been smaller and dwindled faster, even though it was costing them nothing. Music seems to be in the Italian air.

Strongman Talos may have fallen to the sorcery of Medea, but the festival named after him goes from strength to strength **ANDY HAMILTON**

PHOTO PETER BASTIANI



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Tied & Tickled trio live at Duisberg
Mono Club, Germany, summer 1998



kinetic kollektive

Is Weilheim the new Seattle? Tied & Tickled Trio, Notwist and Village Of Savoonga are just three of the endlessly proliferating groups who have put this sleepy German town on the post-rock map. Words: David Keenan. Photography: Philip Lethe

People say that it seems to be always autumn in Weilheim," sniffs Andreas Gerth, keyboards and electronics operator in Tied & Tickled Trio. "It's true that all the music coming from here seems touched by a certain melancholia." A small, rural town south of Munich, Weilheim is currently churning out the most forward-looking music to come out of Germany since Düsseldorf and Cologne first rang with Industrial Klang. It might have a melancholy bent, but the music is as exotically varied as the groups' names. There's the electronic chug of Tied & Tickled Trio, the synth-skewed stoner rock of Notwest and the sample-seeded studio abstracts of Village Of Savoonga. To name the town's three most prominent starters. Based round the Payola, Kolaps and Hausmusik labels, its output would be impressive for a city many times its size, and it is all the more astonishing when closer inspection reveals all those groups and names are drawn from the same small cooperative of artists.

Casper Brandner, drummer in Tied & Tickled/Savoonga/Potawatomi, is fully aware how confusing it can all become. "The incest in our scene sometimes seems a little bit ridiculous to other people," he sympathises, "but it gives us the advantage of being able to extract elements from different musical experiments and putting them together in a new, well-fitting configuration. Also, the fact that we know each other so well musically [means there isn't much need for explanation or discussion and we can work quickly and effectively]."

What's happening here mirrors similar giant steps being taken in backwaters the world over. Weaned on the US hardcore explosion of the mid- to late 80s, young musicians began to dig deeper underground as their appetite for some new kind of kick grew. Free jazz, Electronica, minimalist concrete and outsider folk have all been exhumed and welded to the roiling exoskeleton of full-on hardcore. OK, so in that sense, it's post-rock of a kind, but this time minus all the generic connotations of timidity, turgid, plodding fusion and anti-AC/DC rhetoric that generally characterises this territory, where sensible shoes must be worn at all times. With the Weilheimers, it's more about isolating some truly diverse strains from the rock experience and using them to bolster the original pro-rock intent, as if they were trying to reanimate the corpse.

As a member of Notwest, Tied & Tickled Trio and Village Of Savoonga, drummer Markus Achter is perhaps the scene's key player. Since forming avant rock stoners Notwest with his brother Micha and Martin Messerschmidt, he has watched the Weilheim scene blossom at an alarming rate. "The community of musicians and bands developed over the years and I think it stems from the rural situation we live in," he explains. "I mean, there's not much to do here so we started making music, putting on concerts publishing fanzines and comics. Gradually we created our own economic situation, where one person distributes the records, one makes the covers, one prints the covers... so nearly everybody is more or less involved in all of the activities."

The Notwest are still an active component in the whole Weilheim buzz they instigated some 11 years ago. Superficially more straightforward than many of their mutant offspring, they've reconfigured rock's guitar/bass/drums trio components across three LPs in ways and combinations that appear mathematically impossible on paper. Previously drawing on lots of stoner rock staples such as Codene and Dinosaur Jr., their new album *Shtok* (on Seroval's Diaphonic label) submerges these tendencies in sticky layers of jazz flight and processed synth. Martin Gretschmann — Village Of Savoonga's sampler player, also known for his icy solo Electronica as Console — joins them for the first time, and their attack is now even more subtle and unpredictable.

Markus Achter agrees that Notwest are the most immediately graspable of a truly eccentric mob of musicians. "It's true that Notwest always works with songs," he confirms. "We arrange them and then sometimes try to work against the songs, but we always have a song structure as a starting point. Then we use the instruments, pie on electronics, improvise round them and allow accidents to shape the song. Perhaps we're a pop band that doesn't want to be one."



With Tied & Tickled Trio, the Achter brothers leapt headfirst into the bleep of early electronica while simultaneously setting the controls for the header regions of stellar jazz. They had already begun to explore such territories with earlier projects like the now defunct Potawatomi. Markus remembers their early assays fondly. "That was a collaboration with a free improvising bass clarinet player called Rud Mahal, where we attempted to combine free jazz noise and post-hardcore elements. It was a predecessor and the counterpart to Tied & Tickled in that it combined improvisation and free elements with static structures to create tension, but it worked with other musical styles/methods, it was more intense and it always went to the extremes."

Andreas Gerth was playing in the comparatively straight-rocking Cognok at the time. He originally designed the sleeves for Potawatomi using photographs of the beautiful electronic instruments he constructed from scratch. The Achter brothers' interest was aroused and they asked him on board for their latest venture, which they christened Tied & Tickled Trio. After hooking up with local big cheese, saxophonist/producer Johannes Enders, an old schoolfriend who'd played alongside the likes of Sam Rivers and Donald Byrd, the line-up was complete. Markus recalls, "When we started, Tied & Tickled was more or less only rhythm with electronics and bass, which worked fine but when we recorded it, it was too boring and basically unsatisfying. So we asked Johannes to write and play for the recordings."

Enders's beautifully belched tone comes straight out of the belly of Blue Note, taking cues from the likes of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and the convoluted vibe patterns of Bobby Hutcherson. The resultant pile-up of humming electronic static and propulsive rhythmic hammering that characterises their self-titled debut (originally on Payola, now resuscitated by Bingo) kicks like Big Fun-era Miles or Herbie Hancock's Sextant, albeit without some of those illustrious forebears' sidewalk sats and sizzle. A live favourite is their heavily nailed take on Joe Henderson's "Earth", from the Elements album he recorded with Alice Coltrane. "For us those Joe Henderson records of the 70s are very strange and inspiring," he raves. "We also like some of the Alice Coltrane collaborations with Pharoah Sanders."

But Markus is wary of electronic jazz's negative connotations. "We really wanted to find a way to integrate all this stuff into our music but without it becoming the typical groovy electronics meet jazz thing. Johannes's playing keeps us out of that whole Acid Jazz' thing."

"I think it's also because we don't live in a big city," Andreas Gerth adds. "We aren't so surrounded by all this anonymous, cold, functional technology. We just use electronics on our records as another instrument to create sound that corresponds with our conception of music and that reflects where we come from."

Gerth's homemade instruments — which project electronic silhouettes onto the music, recalling the spooked soundtracks of Chrome and The Residents — are central to Tied & Tickled's deeply human aura and warmth. They look as fabulous as they sound: lost steam engine entrails and primitive pumps, a quaint futurama. "As a sculptor I have a pretty naive relation to technical considerations," he admits. "I tend to judge my creations purely by their appearance. As a musician though, it helps if they actually work. I use something called a D106, which is a construction of metal pieces that not only look interesting, they also sound in a way I like. I simply contact-mic it and put it through an amp."

The Acher brothers also instigated Village Of Savoonga, whose sampler-heavy modern electronics are much more abstract. Their extended forays into hairy film territory have produced three startling, extraterrestrial long players: *Village Of Savoonga*, *Philip Schatz and Score Again*; it's the constant line-up shuffling that keeps Markus inspired. "Working with different people gets you to different results," he says. "It was always important for us to try different things in different constellations to get new ideas. Our concept for Village Of Savoonga was simply to have no concept. We always go from one idea or one noise, anything that comes into our minds." Building tracks from a single sound source or a solitary piano chink, textures are layered and warped in the studio.

"The origin of most of the songs is in the studio," Markus explains. "We're never really sure how the tunes will sound until we finish mixing them. Sometimes we only have a sketchy rhythmic idea or a bass pattern, though we also play fully composed pieces. When we play live, we open out spaces in the songs for intense improvisation, making them simpler and more malleable."

At the heart of Savoonga's studio-bound process is the Uphon recording plant run by resident Hausmusik engineer Mario Thaler — "The Mastermind", as Markus describes him. Indeed, like legendary Krautrock engineers Dieter Denz and Conny Plank before him, Thaler works according to his own uniquely awry sound logic. Markus, however, doesn't see his music conforming to a particularly Krautrock aesthetic. "Sure, I'm a big fan of Jaki Liebezeit's drumming, and for me it was certainly a big influence, alongside the aspects of repetition in some of Faust's music and the electronic sounds of early Cluster. But I really don't feel that that has anything to do with the fact that we're a German band. I was too young to recognise Krautrock when it happened, so I didn't grow up with any particular musical tradition. All German music was as near or far as any other music from elsewhere. For me that only changed with the musical scene which we built up around ourselves."

Markus is quicker to place the activities of Savoonga et al. in the same context as contemporaries like Mouse On Mars. "Some of the new German electronic music is really important and inspiring to us, especially the A-Musik scene from Cologne," he enthuses. "To see Mouse On Mars playing out live, as a band, was a very big influence and one of our most fascinating concert experiences ever."

Savoonga are undoubtedly the most farflung of the Weilheim collective. But their kind of hybrid is becoming more and more common as the leftfield opens out to the abuse of previously straight-edged punks. For Markus, the explosion of new electronic exploration and sampling culture has blown open many a closed mind. "There's definitely a greater interest and understanding of strange, innovative music these days, which makes it much easier to get our music across. It sometimes seems that almost everyone knows the likes of Pierre Henry, Lee Perry or Ornette Coleman. People don't panic anymore when they see a saxophone on stage!" Andreas Gerth is also an advocate of cultural cross-pollination. "I think the borders between the underground and so-called 'high-culture' are much more permeable than they were a few years ago. New ideas and developments spread much faster than before, what was one day a unique expression of a special scene is by the next day public knowledge."



Tied & Tickled: Ralf & Michael Acher and Christian Schmitz (top); bass clarinetist Stefan Schreiter



LEO RECORDS

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and the passionate heartLEO LAB CD 044 RAMON LOPEZ
ELEVEN DRUMS SONGS (solos drums)

Ramon Lopez is a Spanish drummer who lives in Paris and plays in the National Orchestre du Jazz. He is a "natural born drummer" who personifies the fusion between the contemporary jazz drumming and world music. He plays tabla as well, and he teaches Indian music at the Paris Conservatoire. His phenomenal technique helps him to contain his passion heart.

LEO LAB CD 045 FABIO MARTINI /
CIRCIADIANA: CLANGORI

"Circadiana" is an Italian band of eleven musicians organised by the clarinet player and composer Fabio Martini. Most of the group comes from Milan, the rest from Rome and Bologna. Although they are being described as the best young radical improvisers in Italy, on this CD they perform works by Fabio Martini filling them up with exciting improvisations in the true Italian fashion.

LEO LAB CD 046 TRIO NUEVA FINLANDIA
HAI! WHAT'S GOING ON?

The first CD from Finland in the Leo Records catalogue. Jari Peukkaunainen (sexes), Eero Ojaniemi (piano), Teppo Hauha-sho (bass) are the top Finnish musicians who started making music together some thirty years ago. Over the years they played with Anthony Braxton, Dexter Gordon, Ben Webster, and quite recently with Ceci Taylor. One can't ask for higher credentials than this. 60 minutes of music have a definite Finnish flavour.

LEO LAB CD 047 THE KEITH YAWN
QUINTET: COUNTERSINK

Debut recording by the quintet of guitarist Keith Yawn will catapult him and his group to the prominent position on the American new music scene. The names of Mat Maneri and John Lockwood are well known, but the tenor saxophonist Nathaniel Cook will be a revelation for many. A friend who listened to the master said: "that group is a guarantee that Joe Maneri's music will live".

LEO LAB CD 048 THE PANDELIS KARAYORGIS TRIO:
HEART AND SACK

As John Corbett writes in liner notes "It is a profoundly subtle work that sounds fresh and original despite the fact that it occurs within the confines of one of the oldest and most cliché-encrusted musical vehicles - the piano trio. Few of today's players - Masha Mengelberg, Menyin Crispell, Ceci Taylor - are capable of fully unwrapping that dusty mummy". Nate McBride - bass; Randy Peterson - drums

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THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND

the primer

An occasional series in which we offer a beginner's guide to the must-have recordings of some of our favourite musicians. This month, Peter Shapiro gets on the good foot with **James Brown** Illustration: Savage Pencil

Call it the Muhammed Ali principle. If you talk up your own game as much as the Godfather of Soul, you've got to be one bad motherfucker. Listening to (and watching) "the man with the crown," James Brown walks it like he talks it with every grunt, glide, stride and shimmy is the main pleasure of JB's music. Just like watching big screen badasses like Bruce Lee, Richard Roundtree, Tamara Dobson or even Charles Bronson putting foot to butt and dispensing lead, there's a vicious thrill in watching Mr Dynamite camel-walk across a stage up to the mic to deliver one of his trademark grunts with precision timing. With Brown, the timest gesture — a grunt, a shake of the head, an off-the-cuff vamp — meant everything. No one, not even Phil Spector or Trevor Horn, packed so much — timbres, forward motion, sparkle, intensity — into each bar. Even when Brown started to economise in the 70s, he always understood what made pop music great in the first place: an immediacy and momentum that steamrollered all obstacles. Brown is at once the most superficial musician in history and the most profound: there is nothing below the surface of any of his performances, yet his links to an ancient tradition that has its roots in the community musics of West and Central Africa are glaringly obvious. Moreover, Brown was the most assertively black personality ever to be accorded mainstream acceptance in America. His esteem in both the African-American and white communities was such that he was courted by politicians such as Vice President Hubert Humphrey for his "Don't Be A Dropout" campaign. On the day Martin Luther King was assassinated, television stations in cities with large black populations aired a live JB concert in the hope that it would prevent rioting; it worked. As with Louis Armstrong and Jimmy Rodgers, it would be impossible to overstate his importance or overestimate his stature. Unlike most legendary musical figures, however, Brown's musical legacy has actually been treated with the respect it deserves. And it's a huge legacy. Not including side projects, he has at least 15 albums to his credit — not bad for a singles artist. For years Brown's best records languished in PolyGram's vaults, while disposable items such as *Sex Machine Today* (a 1975 attempt to recapture past glories) remained in circulation. Then the label placed Brown's catalogue in the hands of scholars and former associates like Cliff White, Harvey Weinger and Alan Leeds. They have subsequently produced a series of revelatory releases



that are landmarks of curatorial diligence and corporate largesse.

Live At The Apollo

(Pajotor 843479 CD)

James Brown was born in a shack on the outskirts of Barnwell, South Carolina on 3 May 1933. Dancing for pennies as a sideline to picking cotton in his adopted hometown of Augusta, Georgia, he was arrested for breaking into a car to steal a coat when he was 15 years old. Paroled in 1952, he joined lifelong sidekick Bobby Byrd's Gospel Starlighters (the group also played

secular gigs,

for which it was

renamed The Avons).

Unable to afford horns, Byrd and Brown would whistle during their Wyndie Harris and Joe Turner imitations. The group changed its name to The Flames and stepped into Little Richard's shoes when he got too big to play local dates. Brown's irrepressible energy and acrobatics quickly garnered The Flames a following and caught the attention of a local radio station, for which they recorded "Please Please Please" in 1955. Signed to Syd Nathan's King Federal label



Brown and The Flames re-recorded the song for a single in February 1956. It eventually sold over a million copies. Before going on to rewrite the rules about the role of rhythm in Western music, Mr Please Please was just waste to the standard notion of a ballad singer. Like that other funky megalomaniac, George Clinton, Brown always wanted to be a crooner — in his fantasies he was a camel-walking cross between Louis Jordan and Billy Eckstine. But however desperately James desired to be as

urbane and smooth as Charles Brown, he always came out rasping like Roy Brown. Ray Charles may have introduced the sound of gospel into R&B, but Brown brought it into popular music, the speaking-in-tongues possession exhibited by such shouters as The Five Blind Boys Of Mississippi's Archie Brownlee and The Swan Silvertones' Claude Jeffer. After "Please Please Please" Brown released nine

duds in a row until he hit upon the equally prostate supplication "Try Me" (1958), which firmly established him as Soul Brother No. 1. When Brown applied his scorched earth vocals to standards like "Bewildered" and "Prisoner Of Love" and still made the pop charts, smarmy love men like Johnny Mathis were sent running for cover. As monumental as Brown's beliefs were, the greatest moment both artistically and historically, of his early career was *Live At The Apollo*. Convincing that his fans would want a document of his electric live show, Brown approached Syd Nathan to record some dates at Harlem's Apollo Theatre. Nathan refused, but Brown went ahead, even paying for the recording himself. Shelved until May 1963, *Live At The Apollo* eventually hit number two on the American album charts. It is undoubtedly one of the most brilliant performances of Brown's incandescent career. *Live At The Apollo* is pure physicality transposed to vinyl: flash, concatenating motion, bravado, urgency. Despite the crowd noise, Brown is so absorbed in the magnificence of his performance, hearing it now is like spying on someone dancing in front of a bedroom mirror. The only problem with listening to *Live At The Apollo*, or any of his albums, is how the crowd screaming alerts you to what you missed by not being there. Brown doing the mashed potato or good-footing it across the stage or throwing his cape off to come back to the mic one last time. Not only was *Live At The Apollo* a commercial and artistic triumph, but as a result of Brown's own financing and business acumen, the album, along with Ray Charles's growing independence, became a high-profile symbol of the viability of African-American self-sufficiency.

Foundations Of Funk — A Brand New Bag: 1964-1969

(Polydor 537165 2xCD)

Beginning with *Live At The Apollo*, Brown embarked on an unparalleled period of world-changing activity that lasted until "Funky President (People It's Bad)" ended its R&B chart run at the end of 1974. During those 11 years, Brown singlehandedly (with some help from his group) orchestrated a tectonic shift in the foundation of music. In a manner not dissimilar from the compositional methods of Charles Mingus or Duke Ellington, Brown would sing and hum the song parts to bandleaders Nat Jones and Pee Wee Ellis, who would then transcribe them for the other musicians. Estranged from King over this *Live At The Apollo* affair, Brown adopted a holding pattern for the latter half of 1963 and the beginning of 1964, recording versions of "Coldiana" and "Things That I Used To Do" for Mercury subsidiary Smash. Then, in May, with newcomers such as saxophonists Maceo Parker and Nat Jones on board, Brown and his group recorded "Out Of Sight," which found a glorious middle ground between his screaming cover of The Five Royals' "Think" and "Prisoner Of Love." With one ear tuned to the latest street slang and

the primer

the other to Jesse Hill's 1960 proto-funk classic "Ooh Pah Pah Doo", Brown crafted a sinuous and sinewy groove that was as taut and lithe as his own dancing.

"Out Of Sight" was light years away from the mainstream of black American music, as defined by Sam Cooke and Motown, but nothing could have prepared the world for "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag". For all of the "naturalism" that racists and Cartesians like to ascribe to Brown, the bone-rattling effect of "Papa" was largely due to the fact that the master tape was speeded up during post-production to give the record a claustrophobic feel. As a consequence, the blaring horns, piercing guitar and incendiary rhythm section sound much more intense. On "Papa" Brown reduces the entire gospel vocal tradition to fleshy sneaks and guttural roars. But more than just glare and flamboyance, it is also innovative: the "chank" of the guitar part might well be the genesis of reggae. More significantly, the record upgraded the once anonymous instrumental custom end to the be-all and end-all of music.

He followed "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" with the equally marvellous "I Got You (I Feel Good)", "Money Won't Change You" and "Let Yourself Go". The call-and-response interplay between guitarists Jimmy Nolen and Alphonso "Country" Kellum and the horn section on 1967's "Let Yourself Go" marks the moment when the guitar began to supplant the horns as the main instrumental focus in Brown's music. Nolen and Kellum were brought even further up front on the two records that triggered the shift away from soul towards funk – "Cold Sweat" and "There Was A Time". With the exception of the incomparably nosy Dyke & The Blazers, nothing else at the time sounded quite like "Cold Sweat". On the record, Brown uses his voice like he uses his group – as a percussion instrument. The track features the catchiest horn hook ever, and during the "give the drummer some" interlude, you can hear drummer Clyde Stubblefield and bassist Bernard Odum inventing the next 30 years of music.

All of the above and a lot more are included on Foundations Of Funk, possibly the finest moment of PolyGram's reissue programme. In addition to complete versions of "The Popcorn", "I Got The Feelin'", "You Got To Have A Mother For Me" and "Brother Rapp", this double CD contains "Ain't It Funky Now", "Say It Loud – I'm Black And I'm Proud", "Funky Drummer" and a killer live version of "Out Of Sight/Bring It Up (Hoster's Avenue)" for which James summured forth the greatest scream of his career. The highlight, however, is an unreleased take of "Cold Sweat", which gives a fascinating insight into his improvisational approach to composition.

Sex Machine

(Polydor 51 7984 CD)

On the cusp of the '70s, as if in anticipation of Prog rock's tyranny of complex time signatures and chord changes, Brown and his assorted barbarian pipers burst through the gates of damn and instigated an uprising

against the concept of "progression". 1969's "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose" and "Ain't It Funky" are nothing more than vamps on single horn licks, with Brown grunting the respective title phrases a few times.

With the exception of Bobby Byrd and drummers Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield, Brown's entire group walked out in March 1970 over a pay dispute. They were replaced by a band of Cincinnati teenagers called The Pacesetters, who used to hang around the King studios. Now renamed The JB's, the group's core members were two brothers, bassist William "Bootsy" and guitarist Phelps "Catfish" Collins. Quickly recognising the Collins brothers as gifted rhythm players, Brown forever banished the horns to the background of his music. The first record cut with the new group was "Get Up I'll Feel Like Being A) Sex Machine" which ranks

pitting Dennis Skinner or Christopher Hitchens against a Young Conservative in a televised debate.

Hot Pants

(Polydor 51 7985 CD/LP)

Brown left King after *Sex Machine*. *Hot Pants* was his first album for Polydor, and if it is also his finest funk-era album, it is principally by default. For one thing, it's not a double and it only has four tracks. In addition, as the first album recorded after Bootsy and Catfish left to form their own group, *The House Guests*, *Hot Pants* is the greatest testament to JB's powers of regeneration through the vamp, which inaugurated his reign as the "Minister of the new, new heavy funk". As minimal in their way as anything by Steve Reich, "Blues & Parts", "Can't Stand It", "Escape-isn't" and *Hot Pants* ("She's Gotta Use What She's Got to Get What She Wants") relish the fact that they go nowhere fast – they hit their groove from the get-go and stay there for an average of seven and a half minutes. Without Bootsy's virtuosic, if somewhat dominating basslines, the tracks on *Hot Pants* were anchored around Leonor 'Cheese' Martin's droning, yet fearsome guitar compus-cum-solo runs, and bassist Fred Thomas's nudimentary pulses. *Hot Pants* is groove as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary ("a monotonous routine, a rut"), almost completely stripped of its metaphorical connotations. An American Top 25 hit, "Escape-isn't" is apparently the vamp the group played to kill time while they waited for Bobby Byrd to show up for the recording session of "I Know You Got Soul" (the recent CD reissue includes the complete 19 minute take with Soul Brother No. 1 mumbling and stumbling his way through Little Willie John and Jimmy McGriff references). *Hot Pants* itself is basically Funky Kutz's career in nine minutes (minus the three conga players') mesmerising, hypnotic, interlocking polyrhythms, nave polices, and a less than salubrious view of women. Despite the notoriety and enormous commercial success of "Escape-isn't" and "*Hot Pants*", "Can't Stand It" is the track that ushered in the era of the "new, new heavy funk". A remake of Brown's 1967 single "I Can't Stand Myself (When You Touch Me)", it marks the complete transition of the chicken scratch guitar riff from an integral part of the rhythm section to the music's lead element. Catfish's chicken scratch licks had a bell-like tone to them – they still sounded like they were played by an instrument capable of producing harmony and melody – but Cheese's runs are so intense that they sound like they've got no tone at all, just the strings reverberating without resonance.

This guitar sound survived as Brown's signature until the dawn of disco. Despite Jabo Starks's incomparable rhythm patterns and Fred Thomas's increasingly fluid basslines, singles such as 1972's "There It Is" and The JB's "Doing It To Death", and albums like 1973's *The Payback* and 1974's *Heil*, hang almost entirely on the choked riffs of Cheese and Jimmy Nolen. *The Payback*, in particular, explores the deepest reaches of manic wah-wah funk, with Tantric cuts that never resolve themselves



Brown's last significant single of the funk era was 1976's furious 'Get Up Offa That Thing (Release The Pressure)', but by that point 'The Original Deco Man' was eclipsed by a genre that took the conceit of 'Sex Machine' far more literally than the man who invented it.

The JB's

Food For Thought
(People 5601 LP)

'Ladies and gentlemen, there are seven acknowledged wonders of the world. You are about to witness the eighth' — MC Danny Ray introducing The JB's

Brown is notorious for being a vicious taskmaster, but given the often ad-hoc nature of his group, he had to be. With drummers subbing for sick bassists, trumpet players claiming to be sax players in order to land the gig, recording whenever and wherever it felt right, and

with occasionally less than a week to rehearse a new group before hitting the road, the Godfather had to instil his troops with a sense of discipline and fear worthy of the Cosa Nostra. With Brown laying down the law and trombonist Fred Wesley arranging various riffs into warms, *Food For Thought*, the JB's first album under their own name, is easily as good as — if not better than — any of Brown's own funk-era albums. Comprised of three different line-ups (one including such fusion luminaries as Randy Brecker, Joe Farrell and Bob Cranshaw) recorded over six different sessions, *Food For Thought* makes it on pure kinetics alone. 'The Grunt', recorded when the Collins brothers and drummer Frank Waddy were still in the fold, was probably the rawest track associated with Brown since 'Cold Sweat'. It features one of Bootsy's most swinging basslines alongside the greatest maracas playing this side of Jerome Green; the boss's screams are replaced by a squealing sax that became the foundation of The

Bomb Squad's productions for Public Enemy; the other horns are pure Afro-beat call-and-response; and it sounds like it was recorded in the studio bathroom. 'My Brother' (probably devised as a novel way to get around payola — it was dedicated to a disc jockey from Philadelphia) has a chicken scratch riff outcome only by Nile Rodgers and Reggie Lucas, while 'Pass The Peas', one of the three greatest songs ever written about food (the other two are Willie Bobo's 'Fried Neckbones And Some Home Fries' and Irakere's 'Bacalao Con Pan'), is introduced by Bobby Roach and Bobby Byrd waxing nostalgic about Southern treats like Hoppin' John and chitterlings.

Food For Thought was swiftly followed by 1973's *Dong It To Death*. Nearly as good as The JB's debut, it picked up where Hot Pants left off, with both the title track and 'More Peas' (featuring Cheese and Nolan's most atonal guitars) clocking in at over 12 minutes. Brown's bizarre association with Richard Nixon reared

JB gets down with his bad self



its ugly head with the matter-of-fact pronouncements of "You Can Have Watergate, Just Gimme Some Bucks And I'll Be Straight", but their next album, credited to Fred Wesley And The JBs, chose its political allies more carefully. Released in 1974, the theme of *Don't Be Right I Am Somebody* was inspired by one of Jesse Jackson's catchphrases, while the music was undoubtedly inspired by the success of Herbie Hancock's Headhunters album. Brown's first excursion into the realm of synthesizers produced the landmark tracks "Same Beat" and "Blow Your Head", with Soul Brother No. 1 himself playing the Moog rifts in a style that opened up street funk to the cosmic regions being explored by Hancock.

The JBs albums are only the most well-known and successful of umpteen side projects, most of which appeared on Brown's own People label. When Brown's group walked out in 1970, they all, with the exception of Fred Wesley, recorded *Doing Their Own Thing* as Maceo & All The King's Men for the House Of The Fox label. When he returned to the fold, Maceo recorded *Us!* with The JBs as Maceo & The Macks in 1974. The ever-loyal Bobby Byrd was repaid with some of Brown's best grooves ("I Know You Got Soul" and "You Got To Have A Job"). Byrd's wife Vicki Anderson answered the Godfather's chauvinism with killer tracks like "Answer To Mother Popcorn (I Got A Mother For You)", "Super Good", "I'm Too Tough For Mr Big Stuff" and "Message From The Soul Sisters". Meanwhile, Marva Whitney's 1969 album *It's My Thing* came up with the perfect retort to The Isley Brothers' "It's Your Thing".

Rob Base & DJ EZ Rock

"It Takes Two"
(Profile 7185 72)

Public Enemy

"Rebel Without A Pause"

From *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*
(Def Jam 52 7358 CD/MC/LP)

The Original Disco Man made some fine records during the era of rhinestones and cocaine — it's 'Too Funky In Here', "Body Heat", "The Spark" and "Jam" — but compared to Philly International, Salsoul, P-Funk and Chic, Brown was treading water. In the Bronx, however, he was still "the mighty man man with the master plan, the way cool boss with the real hot sauce", and all musical activity existed within his ambit. Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash might have relied on records by Dennis Coffey, The Incredible Bongo Band, Billy Squier, Jimmy Castor and The Isley Brothers to rock the block parties where they made their names, but it's safe to say that Hip-Hop wouldn't exist without the Godfather.

Brown more or less invented the breakbeat with "Cold Sweat", while "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose", "Get On The Good Foot" and "Funky Drummer" were all big-boy anthems. Hip-hop pioneer Afrika Bambaataa paid tribute to Brother Ray's reconfiguration of rhythm by recording "Unity" with him in 1984. With a classic 80s street funk backing courtesy of The Sugarhill

Gang's Keith LeBlanc, Doug Wimbish and Skip McDonald, "Unity" was Brown's best record in ages, but his second coming would have to wait until Eric B. & Rakim's 1996 single, "I Know You Got Soul".

Based on Bobby Byrd's Brown-produced track of the same name, "I Know You Got Soul" helped usher in the era of sampling, as Stetsasonic put it, "To tell the truth, James Brown was old Until Eric and Rakim came out with 'I Know You Got Soul'". "I Know You Got Soul" was so influential that a virtual James Brown appeared on hundreds of records in the late 80s and early 90s, and according to legend, Brown hired someone to check new releases for uncleared samples. "I Know You Got Soul" is rather literal in its Brown quotations, but in 1983 two records appeared that heard his disembodied shuffles and chopped-up beats as the main elements in a chaotic urban soundscape. Cited as the greatest single of all time by Spin magazine in 1989, "It Takes Two" by Rob Base and DJ EZ Rock ranks as one of the most breathtakingly immediate records ever made by someone who was not James Brown. Of course, the part that grabs you by the seat of your pants is a loop of JB's trademark yelp and yell that electrified "It Takes Two" with Brownian motion.



JB: the last pop star?

The loop (as well as the beat and the vocal hook) comes from Lyn Collins's 1972 single, "Think (About It)". Probably Brown's most important outside production, "Think" is his most sampled record after "Funky Drummer" and "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose".

Where Rob Base and EZ Rock had the technology to make Brown's energy positively bonic, Public Enemy and their producers, The Bomb Squad, turned Brown into white noise. Brown is all over PE's two classic albums, *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* and *Fear Of A Black Planet*, but he is torn to shreds, reversed, stunted and deformed. Aside from Clark D's rap, Flavor Flav's interjections, a brief bridge and a synth bass, there is nothing on "Rebel Without A Pause" but a sample of "Funky Drummer" and a mindboggling sax loop from The JBs' "The Grunt". In the late 60s and early 70s Brown was the sound of Black Pride. In The Bomb Squad's hands, the sound of JBs saxophonist Robert McCullough blowing his diaphragm out to produce an impossibly high-pitched squeal became emblematic of Hip-Hop's menace and alienation. "The Grunt" also appears on "Night Of The Living Baseheads", which takes Brown's Tantic funk to a new extreme. Built around a one-second trombone sample, "Night Of The Living Baseheads" doesn't even permit the tiny phrase to resolve itself, cutting it off before it finishes and repeating it throughout the entire track, creating more tension than Bootsy and Catfish managed on "Sex Machine".

Star Time

(Polydor 849 108 4xCD)

Brown's new status as the detonator of the Hip-Hop bomb was the impetus for PolyGram's ambitious reissue programme. No major figure has been treated better by back catalogue reconfiguration than Brown and no box set has been more well-received than *Star Time*. Almost universally hailed as the greatest album of all time upon its release in 1991, *Star Time* threatens a consensus as stultifying as that surrounding Sergeant Pepper. Not only is it a near perfect selection of the man's known music, it also features revelations like the original take of "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag", so you can hear how it sounded before the tape was sped up, and the first appearance of material scheduled for the aborted *Love, Power, Peace* live triple album. *Star Time* is that rare anthology with only one dud track across four CDs, it makes an undeniable argument for the greatness of its subject. The one problem is, it underlines the absence of an equivalent come-back in contemporary music. Perhaps this is its ultimate legacy.

By reducing popular music to its barest essentials and creating the source material for the first genre totally reliant on technology, James Brown killed the pop star.



"The new music reaches back to the roots of what jazz was originally...there's so much room to take this sound and do something else with it - not better, but different." **ARCHIE SHEPP 1965**



Dewey Redman
The Ear Of The Beholder IMP12712
Dewey Redman, alto and tenor; Ted Daniel, trumpet; John Robinson, cello; Leroy Jenkins, violin; Bruce, basic; Eddie Moore, drums and Dewey Johnson, percussion. Recorded June 8 & 9, 1973 and September 9 & 10, 1974.
Interconnection, Inner, Welt-Blitz, PS, Body, Sankofa, Image (in Digital), Sankofa and Death, Join De Vere, Pascayelles, DWD. Tracks 9-11 taken from Cascade (ASD 3380).



Sam Rivers Trio
Live IMP12592
Sam Rivers, tenor, soprano, flute & piano; Cecil McBee, Arild Andersen & Lewis Warren, bass and Barry Anzeloch, drums. Recorded August 18, 1973 and October 18, 1972. House of Musician Poetry 1-3; Suite for Melde - Part One and Part Two.
All selections issued unedited and in their entirety for the first time.



Alice Coltrane
A Measles Tale IMP12672
Alice Coltrane, piano & harp; Pharaoh Sanders, tenor saxophone, flute and bass clarinet; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Ben Riley & Rashied Ali, drums. Recorded January 29, June 6, 1968 and March 7, 1969.
Lord, Help Me To Be, The Skin, Chimes, Babel, Frame, I Want To See You, Love, Shout, Moon, Beloved, Atmos, Peace, Ahava. Tracks 1-2 originally issued on Cosmic Music (AS-3140) and track 3 previously unissued.



Pharoah Sanders
Devi Shabu Shabu
Sorrows, Unseen (IMP12692
Pharoah Sanders, soprano saxophone and wood flute; Weedy Shew, trumpet; Gary Bartz, alto saxophone; Laence Larson Smith, piano, thumb piano & percussion; Cecil McBee, bass; Clifford Jarvis, drums; Nathaniel Bettis and Anthony Wilcox, percussion. Recorded July 1, 1970.
Surprise, Unknown Unseen and Let Us Go Into The House Of The Lord.



Archie Shepp
The Way Shop IMP12722
Archie Shepp, tenor saxophone; Jimmy Owens, trumpet; Grachan Moncur III, trombone; Walter Davis Jr and Steve Burrell, piano; Charles Davis, tenor saxophone; Ron Carter and Walter Booker, bass; Beaver Harris and Roy Hayes, drums. Recorded January 29, 1968 and February 26, 1969. Blues If I Knew (The Street); Freedmen's Rite, Sopranino Lucy; New Africa; Bakal. Tracks 5-6 originally issued on Kwekuus (AS-6262).



Marion Brown
Three For Shepp IMP12692
Marion Brown, alto saxophone; Grachan Moncur III, trombone; Dave Burrell & Stanley Cowell, piano; Morris James Edouard, bass; George Clegg & Beaver Harris, drums. Recorded December 1, 1969. New Blue Portraits, The Shadow Knows, Speaks; West India, Delicado.



The Cecil Taylor Unit/Rewell Rudd Sextet
Mixed IMP12702
Tracks 1-3: Cecil Taylor, piano; Jimmy Lyons, alto saxophone; Archie Shepp, tenor saxophone; Ted Curson, trumpet; Rewell Rudd, trombone; Harry Grimes, bass & Sunny Murray, drums. Recorded October 10, 1961.
Tracks 4-7: Rewell Rudd, trombone; Robin Kenyatta, alto saxophone; Giampoli Logari, flute; bass clarinet; Charlie Haden & Lewis Worrell, basses and Beaver Harris, drums. Recorded July 8, 1965.
Rude, Piss, Mind, Everywhere, Nebula No-No, Respect, Sober's Blues.



Albert Ayler
Live In Greenwich Village The Complete Impulse Recordings IMP2232
Albert Ayler, tenor and alto saxophones; Don Ayler, trumpet; Joe Frazier, cello; Michael Simpson, violin; Bill Folwell, Henry Grimes, Alan Silva & Lennox Willmott, bass; Sunny Murray & Beaver Harris, drums; George Stacks, trombone.

Disc 1 recorded March 28, 1965 and December 18, 1966. Holy Ghost, Truth Is Marching In, Our Prayer, Spirit Rejoice, Divine Pecanpie, Angels.
Disc 2 recorded February 26, 1967. For John Lorraine, Change My Name, Light In Darkness, Heavenly Hosts, Spiritual Rebirth, Infinite Spirit, Design Is The Alpha, Universal Thoughts (previously unissued).

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New York avantist **Alan Licht** loves art rock, free jazz and Metal excess. That's why Loren MazzaCane Connors, Rashed Ali and Jim O'Rourke are all dying to play with him. By AC Lee

To me, post-rock means the abstraction of the feeling of punk or rock into a new, still emerging multimedia identity," declares New York guitarist Alan Licht, holding court in his Dream House, three stories above Canal Street in lower Manhattan. "It seems like the art world and music world are merging once again."

From the beginning, Licht's crusade has been to infuse high art with doses of low rock attitude and vice versa. Whether pursuing his mission as a solo musician, in groups such as Love Child, Run On and Rudolph Grey's Blue Humans, or in collaborations with artists ranging from DJ Spooky and Rashed Ali to Love's Arthur Lee, Licht anticipated and embodied a post-rock sensibility before it was ever a conscious movement. In his definition, the point is not to question rock's boundaries just for deconstruction's sake, but to celebrate its values via his constant redefining of its limits. He has articulated his position in his wrings for magazines like *Halo* and *Forced Exposure*, where he helped reintroduce the likes of La Monte Young to contemporary rock audiences.

Like numerous guitar rabbis before him, Licht mines the interstices of orthodox technique. Ever on the prowl for new modes of expression, his playing incorporates Derek Bailey's clang sonatas, Hendrix's endless static drone and sustain, and the panharmonic vista of Sonic Youth. He also retains a firm command of the rapidsire, blues-based chops of the Page/Beck school, a tradition usually scorned by punk-inspired musicians and fans as excessive and contemptible. As a result, he actively cultivates a sensibility which exults the technical grandstanding of guitarists like Lindsay Buckingham and Eddie Van Halen alongside vanguard iconoclasts such as Hans Reichel and Keiji Hano. "A guitar hero is a guitar hero," proclaims Licht evenly.

His solo CD, *The Evan Dondo Of Noise?*, released this year on NZ lo-fi-music possester Bruce Russell's Corpus Hermeticum label, constitutes his most fully realized statement to date, merging both his musical and critical pursuits. The music is a survey of everything he does well — overdriven shreddests for electric guitar, spiced bi-tone organ études, and a duet with a tape loop of a contestant in a yodeling contest, which is as arresting for its musicality as its tongue-in-cheek hilarity. Meanwhile, he persuasively outlines his post-rock platform in the disc's extensive sleeve notes. Presented as an issue of *Lopponology*, a journal intermittently included in Hermeticum releases, he simply reprints his heady two-year correspondence with Russell in face of the latter's narrow "one-eyed gospel" of "free noise". Licht brilliantly champions the possibilities of song, while exposing the elitist rhetoric of art versus pop as an empty pseudo-distinction, and so-called genre distinctions like noise, Minimalism and rock as mere semantic conventions. The whole thing is vintage Licht, defining a space where art nerds and headbangers alike align behind an aesthetic vision in which art occurs not in exclusive zones of activity, but along the same broad continuum.

The five CD barrage Licht released on the world in 1997, which included *The Evan Dondo Of Noise?* and a set of duets with Loren MazzaCane Connors, illustrates how he slots his various modes into just such a continuum. This autumn he brings into an installation with his piece *Today I Am A Fountain Pen*, which roughly coincides with the release of *Mojimino Estates*, a "big band" recording led by Licht and Connors, and produced and masterminded by Jim O'Rourke. On the back burner is his collection of essays and music criticism, to be published by Drag City.

Growing up, I hated rock music," Alan Licht recalls. "When I was a little kid I remember seeing a poster of Peter Frampton where he's shirtless, and I just remember thinking that was the most repulsive thing I'd ever seen, and that I didn't

want to ever have anything to do with it as long as I lived. I was, like, six years old! I thought it was totally gross."

Licht spent his adolescence in New Jersey, USA, which was impossibly suburban and even a little creepy in its cultural haplessness. But he soon enough forsook the relatively conservative upbringing that had originally swayed him against the lampen profanity of rock. "It was Shawn Cassidy, of all things, that turned me around. Sent me on the path to rock 'n' roll heaven."

By the age of nine, Licht had picked up the guitar that set him on his precocious path of discovery, scouring nearby New York for records and magazines, for his rock data files to sustain him through his high school cover group phase. The ecstatic rumble of proto-hardcore groups like Husker Du and Bad Brains, and the new noises emanating from NYC, left Licht as enraptured by the aesthetic issues surrounding rock as the noise itself. "There was an article [music critic] Robert Palmer wrote in the New York



Times where he mentioned Sonic Youth, Live Skull and Glenn Branca being the new guitar shit, and then the *Telus All Guitars* cassette magazine came out, which was the first place I heard Rudolph Grey."

But hip New York noise couldn't entirely eradicate his suburban upbringing. He developed an interest in the Metal scene that dominated 80s pop music, whose latest licks and tricks were transcribed monthly in glossy musician mags. Ironically, he first encountered his early role model Henry Kaiser in *Guitar Player*. Following him over the next few years shaped the final stage in Licht's evolving style and sensibility. "I had come from playing lead guitar in classic rock cover bands, then Metal and jazz guitar lessons, so in a way I had heard everything that was going to influence my playing."

Kaiser introduced Licht to structural ideas he could apply beyond the guitar. "I was really into [Kaiser's] *It's A Wonderful Life*," he remembers, "which sounds like ten people playing at once, and he explained how it was inspired by Eric Parker and Terry Terry. At the same time I was getting into Philip Glass and Steve Reich, so I just started making all these different connections."

These connections naturally fed back into his love for rock and pop. "I realised pretty early on that, in [The Beatles'] 'She Loves You', the way the melody stays constant while the chords change behind it, was the same thing that interested me in Steve Reich's *Music For 18 Musicians*."

Licht was also consciously trying to avoid the common mistake made by putative avant gardists: "A lot of people discard what they heard originally," he argues. "When they get to Coltrane they go 'OH! This is the real thing!' But for me, it didn't mean I didn't still listen to Neil Young."

A further concern was to avoid the academic vacuum and retain the urgency of rock. "A lot of the people associated with experimental electric guitar playing just didn't like good rock music," he laments. "That's what was so cool about meeting Rudolph Grey and [Borbetomagus guitarist] Donald Miller. Rudolph's favourite stuff in the world is *The Music Machine and Love*."

Licht had been a fan of Grey ever since high school. The enigmatic guitarist (and author of the definitive Ed Wood biography) used to make a relentlessly exuberant

THE GREAT PRETENDER



racket in the early 80s with free jazz giants Beaver Harris and Arthur Doyle as the group Blue Humans. Inviting Grey onto radio show he hosted, Licht cannily engineered an invitation to perform with Grey on a bill at the Knitting Factory in New York, where he got to meet sympathetic minds like Thurston Moore and Donald Miller for the first time.

Licht was soon splitting his time between two ensembles: the reconstituted Blue Humans with Grey and drummer Tom Suryal, and Love Child, an adventurous indie rock outfit which imploded on the cusp of being the Next Big Thing. "I was really into having things very polarised," he says of his double life. "That's the way I listen to music, so I just figured, 'Why not?'"

Yet playing in groups as stylistically diverse as Love Child and Blue Humans was still untypical behaviour in the early 90s. "I certainly didn't know of anybody else who was doing it," Licht asserts. "It's not like Donald Miller had a pop band in his closet."

But the last few years have witnessed a shift in attitudes, with lapsed rockers dinging into areas such as free improvisation and digital music. "It's a lot more common now to find someone who likes both Tony Conrad and Edin Frost," says Licht. "When I started doing this stuff the audience was much more mutually exclusive. There were people who were fans of my guitar playing in Love Child who couldn't deal with The Blue Humans."

Art and rock impulses collided with much more frequency in Run On, a group founded in 1993 by Rick Brown and Sue Garner, which Licht joined in its infancy. Despite an astounding collective pedigree, they never seemed to get the breaks any 'challenging' group needs to survive. Though their Start Rocking and No Way albums were well received for their sharp songwriting and adventurous arrangements, the group ended their five year association with Matador in June. What with everyone now involved in separate projects, it's unlikely they'll play together again.

For his part, Licht had never stopped pursuing extracurricular activities, including an ongoing duo with Loren Mazzacane Connors, which has produced three full-length recordings and some memorable concerts. The singularity of Connors's lyrical, high-kinesic wal would seem to preclude accompaniment, but Licht sublimates his more garrulous nature to the duo's fluid, sparse interactions, while remaining open to the unexpected detour, as evidenced toward the end of Mercury, the most recent and riveting of their releases.

Their upcoming Drag City release Hoffman Estates, however, places them in an

altogether different context. Given the paucity of people with tastes as catholic as Jim O'Rourke and Alan Licht, a collaboration between them was inevitable. The common ground for this particular project was a fondness for 70s Miles Davis epics, like *Jack Johnson* and *Get Up With It*. With Connors and Licht taking on the roles of Davis and his musicians, O'Rourke assumed the mantle of producer Teo Macero. "It was Jim's production all the way," says Licht. "He brought Loren and I out and totally organised the sessions. Everything was improvised straight to DAT in one afternoon, then he did overdubs himself and with others for the next week, and edited the thing down to its current form."

Also a fan of Licht's writing, O'Rourke has commissioned him to write sleeve notes for the CD reissue of an album by the truly underground English guitarist Ray Russell, on O'Rourke's new Molokai imprint. After Kaiser turned me onto [the late Japanese noise guitarist] Masayuki Takayanagi and all that stuff, I asked him who else was playing like that back then and he mentioned Ray Russell," Licht recalls. "When I met Rudolph a couple of years later, he played me Russell's Secret Asylum album. Rudolph's piece 'Implosion 73' is basically a Ray Russell tribute."

I'm standing in a tiny rock club waiting for Licht to take the stage as last minute support for punk icons Fugazi. The relative incongruity of the billing isn't lost on the latter's diehard teen legion. Licht nonchalantly appears onstage and proceeds to float out an ocean of steel stringed waves, making subtle melodic permutations over a clutch of notes caught and looped rhythmically by his delay pedal. The Reichian soundworld hypnotises even the rowdiest of would-be hecklers.

Touching ground again half an hour later, he pauses quickly to return, then launches into a sparse but utterly earnest version of The Who's 'Baba O'Reilly', positively perpleasing his already confused charges. It strikes me that the opening piece actually served as an extended meditation on the latter song's famous intro, which Pete Townshend had copied from Terry Riley in the first place. Licht agrees, even as the connection hadn't occurred to him before. Does Licht have any straight rock ambitions left after a decade of post-rock perversions? "My actual real rock 'n' roll dream is to be lead guitarist in The Pretenders," he enthuses. "I mean, Chrissie Hynde would be unbearable, but I think I would be good. I would try to put up with whatever it would take to do it." □ Hoffman Estates is released in mid-November on Drag City

Alan Licht (2nd right) with Run On



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Bob Dylan's reputation as a brilliant has declined, shifting the focus to Dylan

the singer

There are sirens, there are foghorns, and there is Bob Dylan. In 1966, as is well known, Dylan was bobbing precariously in treacherous waters, with thousands of folk mutts snapping at him from the shore. With The Hawks (aka The Band) behind him, the former folk hero had cast his voice onto crackling frequency oceans of heavily amplified music, and the multihued, jealous guardians of root rock tradition were outraged.

"Judas" you can hear one aculear scream, on the recently released *Bob Dylan Live 1966: Royal Albert Hall Concert* (actually recorded in Manchester), while Dylan and Robbie Robertson are tuning their guitars for the closing song, "Like a Rolling Stone": "I don't believe now. You're a liar," Dylan spits back, before instructing The Hawks, "Play fucking loud."

This begins one of the most recognizable vocal performances in the history of electric music. Pumped up on volume, Dylan and The Hawks rip into their buccaneering noise with renegade ferocity, their shanty organ and scything guitars creaking, whining, distorting and crashing behind the drums, as they heave the song through its endless peaks and falls. Though the music is pitching precariously back and forth, Dylan's vocal

keeps an even keel. Forced to compete with the volume, he times his delivery to begin at the crest of each riff. In the split second the abyss opens up below, Dylan fires off his lines, each one resonating loudly against the yawning emptiness, their endings curtailed by clipped guitars. Suspended across the crevice between the rolling riffs, the sound of the voice is remarkable — taut as a wire, spun whirlspin thin and snapping back on itself the moment the line is unfurled.

Sometimes, it's like a foghorn blaring furiously across the desolate night, in which The Hawks open up in the song. Elsewhere, it's a siren, otherworldly and beautiful, summoning you into the abyss. His phrasing, too, is extraordinarily elastic. When he is not weighing a sentence with a novel's load, he is stretching the last word of a staccato sung phrase — "Do you wanna make a deal?" — to fill a whole line's length, unwaveringly holding the note while The Hawks tread water for an eternity beneath him. For the duration of the note, its timbre unlocks the complexity of emotions behind its performance. It is at once hurt, angry, bitter, coquettish and poisonous. But it also reveals the extent of the singer's vulnerability, and never before has he sounded so young. When Dylan went electric, he finally got to sing his age.

Unlike Caruso, Bob Dylan was not born with the gift of a golden voice. That it has often been a great one is

down to the singer's iron resolve not to allow its commonly perceived shortcomings — abrasive tone, grating nasality, tungelessness, wayward pitching — to get in the way of the needs of the song. When he started out in 1960, a Minnesota kid adrift in New York City's coffee shop folk circuit, he sang himself coarse to make his voice fit the ancient folk blues and country ballads he was singing. Never short of self-belief, he sang the blues like a sharecropper, and Country folk with a hillbilly twang. If he began as a brilliant mimic, his own distinctive voice emerged soon enough, along with the hundreds of songs now pouring out of him. From early on his distinguishing traits were in place — the breathing that allowed him to hold notes forever, the sudden register leaps, superrative phrasing and, above all, playfulness. Then there were the performer's tricks, when he'd come on like, say, the Nabob of Sobs, weeping through the cracked tones and timbres that underscore the tearful plea of a blues like "Corinna, Corinna".

Within two years he'd become the reluctant voice of a generation. He was writing songs that shared its beliefs and articulated its fears. The irony of being licensed by the folk sector for the truths he was singing in an ageless blues voice when he was barely into his twenties was not lost on Dylan. The folksies might have prized honesty and authenticity, but only the kinds you could wear as a badge, it seemed. No wonder he quickly became disillusioned with the folk scene and went over to rock, where he could act his age.

Before he was crippled by self-awareness, however, Dylan was fully capable of honestly expressing his



songwriter overshadows his exciting, if erratic singing voice. Over the years, his writing output as a performer with the experience to put flesh on the bones of his early songs. Words: Biba Kopf

not the song . . .

thoughts in his old man's voice. After all, he was, and still is, a performer, and performance necessitates a degree of play-acting. The illusion of integrity is preserved in the conviction of the performance. Dylan's early catalogue is scattered with brilliant and convincing performances, by turns breathtaking, hilarious, heartbreaking and terrifying. Only people whose preferred leisurewear is a long white robe and hood would fail to be moved by his singing of 'The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll', from his third album *The Times They Are A' Changin'*. Casting a crime report as a lament, Dylan sketches the details of a poor black maid's murder and the circumstances of her life with a weirdly impassioned objectivity that runs counter to the lament's ring and felling coherency. But once he's through with the facts, and the full extent of the injustice is exposed, his controlled anger gives way to the closing verse's outpouring of grief.

From the same period, a rare live recording of Dylan dueting with folk saint Joan Baez in 1963 graphically illustrates his divergence from the singer's suffocating dictats on content and form. Performing one of Dylan's most platitudeous protest pieces, 'With God On Our Side', at Newport Folk Festival, the contrast between the two voices says it all in the way Dylan's seems to be tugging away from Baez's sanctimonious and cloying embrace of her hollywines. The audience's rapturous approval of its message, with complete disregard to its quality, must have surely intensified Dylan's will to rock.

Not only is the company better, the music's more fun.

Dylan's reputation as

rock's poet laureate, predicated on his three mid-60s electric records, *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde*, has always overshadowed his genius as a performer. His artistry is still assessed on the strength of his songs, yet he has hardly been off the road since his American comeback tour with The Band in 1974. Compared to the thousands of hours logged on the road, writing and recording command a comparatively small percentage of his output. Regardless, it flew-below a complicitance to write him off as a spent force after a poor album release, even as he has been going out right after night, evolving his performance skills, and restlessly reworking songs from a repertoire stretching back almost 40 years, improving new games to play and finding new things to say in them.

Over the decades the mysteries of a voice that seemed to change annually — from *Blonde On Blonde*'s velvet whiplash, through the bizarrely mutating Country croon of the late 60s, to the brittle Metal roar of his brilliant mid-70s albums and Rolling Thunder tours — have resolved into the singular voice that has carried him through the 90s.

As the decade began, his credibility had reached an all time low. In the 80s he released a succession of poor to indifferent albums, alleviated by the occasional affecting recording — the bleakly sung spiritual 'Death Is Not The End', the blues apocalypse of 'Blind Willie McTell', — and the mixed blessing of 1989's *Oh Mercy*. And it was difficult to work out the motivation behind the endless tours he undertook, as a good many of them were joyless affairs for listless performer and audience alike.

From the beginning of the 90s, Dylan suffered a serious songwriting drought, which only finally let up with the release last year of *Time Out Of Mind*. Paradoxically, he seemed to rediscover pleasure and purpose in performance, first with a pair of acoustic covers albums and then on the road with his best support group since The Band.

Now in his late 50s, his voice has naturally enough lost its youthful elasticity, for which Dylan the performer compensates with his ever inventive phrasing. Yet his weathered tones give the older songs which he shuffles through his constantly changing concert repertoire the patina of experiences he couldn't have had when he wrote them. Where he used to dazzle the 60s with his precocious brilliance, in the 90s his performances have real conviction.

Words alone are never enough. Until the grain of the voice speaks word from sound and fuses them in song, they are inert and expressionless. Nothing if not all grain, Dylan's 90s voice is scarred with a lifetime's loneliness that is the lot of the restless Troubadour, hearing his songs from town to town. If the downside is his habitual solitude, the gain is the grain that authenticates the 15 minute passages from rage against time to resignation at its passing in the song 'Highlands', which closes *Time Out Of Mind*. This late in his career, Bob Dylan has lost none of his capacity to hear his listeners' devastated by the revelation that is his voice. □ Bob Dylan Live 1966 & our now on Columbia Legacy

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Every month we invite a musician to select a set of records written by us, and to introduce and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of . . .

Squarepusher

Tasted by Rob Young

Squarepusher, aka 23 year old Tom Jenkinson, grew up in Chelmsford, South East England. A self-taught bassist, he joined various local groups while still at school. In the early 90s, inspired by the high-velocity post-Acid House breakbeats emanating from London, and an encounter with Richard James (aka Aphex Twin), he obtained primitive sampling and sequencing equipment and, from his bedroom, developed the fusion of crunchy, bombarding Jungle, plus hyperactive bass, that became his trademark. These first efforts were released as the *Alley Road 7-tracks 1.2* by The Duke Of Herringay, on the eccentric Brighton label Spymaria. An energetic, unpredictable Jenkinson is not averse to heckling the crowd. Jenkinson became popular in the London club circuit in the mid-90s, before releasing his debut album, *Fred The Smart Sheep*, on Rephlex in 1996. Following 1.2's for *Mr. Vee* and *Mr. G* (both on Rephlex), he was signed by Warp in 1997, with *Handyman*. His follow-up record *Hornet Doody* (1998) was a critical smash, and a collection of solo tracks, *The Jukebox Jamboree*, followed. One Note, the title track of which is a solo piano piece played by Jenkinson. He currently lives in Shoreditch; the Jukebox took place during a brief visit to London.





JACO PASTORIUS

"Slang (Bass Solo)" from Weather Report: *The Jaco Years* (Columbia/Sony)

[After five seconds] Jaco
That chord — the vibrato, is
unmistakably Jaco I'll never

forget the first time I saw him on a video. I was just
embraced by what he was putting into the instrument,
I've never seen that happen before. Sounding

Do you listen to a lot of fusion?

I actually find Weather Report as an ensemble quite
painful, to be honest. It seems like a bit of a Joe Zawinul
show, with Jaco and Wayne Shorter tagging along, and
it's a bit pompous for me. There's bits and pieces, but
when Jaco joined, it went really shit. I think the earliest
stuff is the best. Zawinul played on [Miles'] *Bitches Brew*
and in *A Silent Way*, that to me is a much more
important piece of music than the majority of late
Weather Report.

This music was never very fashionable at the time you were playing in your early teenage groups. Was that a problem for you?

I was never really conscious of that, because I wanted
to play in every band that was going. I had so much
enthusiasm, I would want to play a gig every night if I could.
I was in three or four bands at a time until I moved out of home. I really enjoy watching someone
elevate when they're playing. It excites me.
[Techno's] anonymity always confused me — I often
used to wonder around clubs, thinking I am the only
person in this room wondering what could be done, and
how it could be injected with some sort of idea of a
performance? Because it's very anti-that, or seemed
to be. And pretty communistic — DJs are the purveyors
of music, and it's just accepted by the mass.

Did you take any bass lessons?

No. It didn't seem to be necessary. I think I seen as a
bit of a muso-y, boffing thing. 'Oh yeah, he plays loads
of notes per second and that makes it music.' That's fair
enough, but I put those notes in because I think they're
in the right place.

You seem to prefer speed and clatter more than space and changes of pace... .

Yeah! Things are changing a bit for me, but I still love
being completely immersed. I never really got into
minimal music. I admit that playing and watching and
getting a good reaction, and having people enjoy it, is
an egocentric thing, but it's not necessarily so much
about that. I'm into people, and people's energy.

DJ TRAX

"We Rock The Most" from the CD accompanying
Simon Reynolds's book *Energy Flash*

I didn't know music like this existed on CD. This is 92.
Hackney Hardcore, I'd say — Is It Moving Shadow? It's
not Cosmo & Debs is it? It's funny hearing it on CD, because
I'm used to hearing this on really shitty vinyl. Not
so much Moving Shadow, because they were always
quite a professional operation. Who would this be?

You might know the individuals responsible for the track, if not the name they're using here.

Not 4 Hero, is it? No, this doesn't sound like them
[listens for a while]

**It's DJ Trax, an alias for Moving Shadow boss Rob
Playford and Devro Davies. You're right about the date.**
Why didn't I say that? It's such an obvious one. I definitely
haven't heard this track before. When I was first hearing
this sort of stuff, it was the ultimate. When you hear it now,
it sounds thin, and a bit funny, but at the time it was
like end of the world music, because it didn't give a shit. It
was more punk than punk was. It was plagiarising without
any regard for anything at all. People were nicking things
off other people's tracks — you'd hear the same riff, but
split up a bit, and a bit out of time, so the loop was wrong.
It was like Armageddon [laughs].

I didn't get into House music or 4/4 with regular
electronic sounds until 1990, so I missed the Acid
thing. I was hearing the earliest breakbeat
manifestations from Hip House, which kickstarted the
breakbeat scene over here. And then suddenly it was
like a race, and the bpm's started getting faster and
faster year by year. It felt like everything's been torn to
pieces, everything's falling apart completely. And at the
time I related to it because it was using drum breaks,
and that was where I really came in. 14 year olds
absolutely fucked out of their brains were coming into
shops asking for Hardcore white labels, literally any
white label, picking up an armful of flyers, and going
out of the shop again. I still associate that sound with
going to raves and seeing people up against walls,
shivering and hardly able to move.

On your earliest tracks, were you trying to rinse out as much of the energy and speed of breakbeat as possible?

Yeah. There's also an attitude about which says that
somehow I got into drum 'n' bass around 95/96, went
in, took all the best bits, and turned them up, and now I'm
no longer interested. It was not really the case. Basically
I've been trying to do that repetitive break thing, which
to me was trying to make punk systematic: how can you
get these beats to bring your brain out as much as
possible? There was a bpm climax for the earlier
breakbeat stuff in '93. I was just using a drum machine
— it was a 140/150 bpm vibe — and the last thing I
put out which I consider to be part of that was [1997's]
Big Loopt, where all the tracks are 190 consistently.

Now, everything's fizzled out again, and everything's
really random. New weird projects are springing up and
it's another fertile period again. This is going to sound
pretentious, but I've just been reading about the way
planets form, and the origins of life, and planets
coagulating out of big balls of dust. I see it like that at
the moment: loads of people quite separate, doing stuff
Maybe we're going to have another race, but in a
different dimension.

SOFT MACHINE

"Facilit!" from *Third* (BGO Records)

[Mike Ratledge's organ starts very gradually] Doh! Miles
Davis. No — I ran in! That weird distorted organ-y thing
reminded me of those early, really raspy, stampy '70s

live performances... No, it's not at all, is it. [Laughs]

Right period, wrong place. It's by a group who were turned around by these Miles records, among others.
Yeah, it has to be '70-75. This is obviously influenced
by it. It reminds me of Miles At Filmore East.

It's an English group — this is a long keyboard intro. It reminded me of a lot of textures on your new record.
Yeah — fifty. Even down to the chord progressions.
But... England? Is it one of the members of the Prog
group? Not Tangerine Dream is it?

Fans of this group probably wouldn't tarnish them with a name like "Prog".

I'm just thinking of all the keyboard players in British
bands of this era, and there's no way they would do this
kind of thing. They were always quite conservative, from
what I know of them.

It's Soft Machine — this track is 18 minutes long. They specialised in jamming, working up long, freely evolving pieces.

There's something to be learnt from that approach, in
my opinion. There's a big spectrum of music from
around that time, with big jams going on for ages, and
different things happening. I really love and enjoy a lot of
that music, and I've taken part in a lot of stuff in that
mode. But there's something about the '90s where I
simultaneously love that idea of things happening
spontaneously, but to release that on records... there's
something to be learned by really trying to tune in. I
think a lot of the time, these jams feel quite airy.

You're saying the musician now has to be a good editor as well, cut out the dead spots?

Yeah, precisely. I think musicians have got the
responsibility for that, and nowadays it's available, because
I can personally have my own studio, so I can realise: This is
going on a bit. There's something about the extended
solo which... there aren't enough hours in the day.

It's maybe symptomatic of our current era that we're
so used to squashing everything together — we do so
much in a day, that maybe there isn't time for those
moments any more. I can always make room. I'm
probably a survivor of this era, I'm not being killed by it,
but I think a lot of people are. We're being pulled apart
completely, as people, and by society itself. No one had
heard of global concerns in the '70s, but suddenly
anyone with any sort of conscience is wondering if
we're still going to be alive in 30 years' time.



ALEC EMPIRE

"Lash The 90ties" from Generation Star Wars
(Mille Plateaux)

[Over bearless intro] I keep
thinking this is going to be a
drum 'n' bass track, because
there's that chord

modulating up and down. But this sounds different.
[Beat locks in] This has got to be pretty new, basically,
hasn't it?

It's four years old now, but it could have been released this week.

I tell you what it sounds like to me: the drum rhythm

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reminds me of Mike Paradinas's drum production — it sounds like an HR-16, or a glock old drum machine with loads of sweep in it, and totally distorted. But it's too direct for Mike Paradinas — too 'on it'. It's quite genuinely emotion-rousing, without being too nasty to Mike. It's got a Detroit-American flavour to it somehow. It's a weird one. It's timeless as well. I suppose it's maybe by German Ambient people? It's got to be.

'It's Alec Empire.'

[Surprised] Is it really? Bloody hell! That's actually a surprise, to be honest with you. I first heard Alec Empire in '95, and it was a really heavy, distorted Jungle track but with a lack of funky vibe — not being nasty to Alec, I think he's sorted.

There's a strong political dimension to Empire's music which is lacking in most other 'Star Wars generation' Electronica — why do you think Techno is so undogmatic?

He is very political about his music, and even though I don't always enjoy it, you can hear that militant aspect. He's got something to say, and he's not scared about it either. I can see what makes him angry as well, because it's the same shit that makes me angry. He looks around and sees no voice of dissent in his own generation. That's probably the main thing that pulls me towards his music. I think with people my age — early twenties — no one's interested in politics as a force of change. We've just inherited an apathetic 'Oh well, we can't do anything about it' attitude from the Thatcherite years, rolling on in this unstoppable reign. It drummed it into us that there wasn't anything you could do if you didn't like this person. You just had to stick to it.

There's nothing explicitly political in your music? Would you like there to be?

Not at all! It's an idea which was stated most eloquently by Carl Jung in a book called *Hon And His Symbols*: 'Yes, we have gone past the point of accessing political [issues], we are beyond God... God is dead, so where do we look?' And we don't know where to look. Basically what he says is, we have to look back inside, and reacquaint ourselves with the primitive mind. He argued that in the 20th century we're just obsessed with 'one plus one equals two' rationality. Politics has lost that; political parties aren't really the people in control of the world any more. People know that, and I think that's a lot to do with the fact that there are stickers everywhere saying 'Don't vote' [Jung's] saying, look back inside and reacquaint ourselves with the primitive instinctive, the old mind, if you like. That will itself reveal where we've got to go.

There's this '90s spirituality thing, all the New Age shops and stuff, and it's quite token, but you can sense people are yearning for something else, and I think there is maybe a turning point on the horizon. That's my viewpoint, and with what I do, I'm attempting to reacquaint myself with a part of me which can almost be on autopilot. That's the only way we're ever really going to go forward.



CHARLES MINGUS QUINTET "Lady Bird" from *The Charles Mingus Quintet Plus Max Roach (Fantasy)*

The bassist is the key element? It's not Mingus, is it? Very, very good — it's lovely. I'd say it was 62? 60?

It was recorded in 1955.

Don't know this one.

You once told me you're a fan of older jazz and bebop — do you source breaks from this far back?

Well, I never studied music, so consequently the only history I really know is my own, that I've constructed. And what I got from these early jazz records is an element of exultation, and personality that I get a clear feeling of invention, and happiness that it's happening. A lot of it's melodically dated, and it has got that problem of sounding a bit sentimental nowadays, but when I started listening, and researching my own jazz history, the main thing I gained from it was the sense of positivity and excitement about a musical form which seems open. You see combos playing this stuff now down at Pizza Express and it's quite sad, it's lacking it.

This kind of music is like having a conversation, involving varying degrees of geniality or confrontation.

There's the Q&A thing. The first jazz drummer I played with, when I was 15, just said 'Let's do question and answer — you do four bars, and I'll do four bars!' That dialectical thing in music seems quite absent now — I really enjoy that, and it had an early impact. The conversational aspect of early jazz is an important thing to me; I'm always overexplaining things saying far too much, but maybe I just adore communication between people, and I try to synthesize that on my own.

All your recordings are made when you're alone, so are you talking to yourself?

It's very difficult — very few of us live with a genuine sense of community, and I think that's reflected in music as well. You can hear individuals, but not individuals flourishing, really.

In Techno especially, it can be more like individuals trying to march in step.

Instead of relating to each other within the context of a combo, people are relating to each other across a musical genre. We're trying to say something, but all we can do is mutually affirm each other, because we know so little about each other. All we can do is advance and hope we're going the right way.

I think the climax of [musicians] working together, for me, is mid-60s Coltrane quartet — Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner and Jimmy Garrison. When I listen to those recordings, there seems to be a communication which is ascendant. There's definitely a massive religious subtext to it, of ascendance, and trying to go beyond physicality. You get the feeling they weren't thinking about what they were playing when they were doing it — they were there, you know? I yearn for that.

So you're not uncomfortable with the notion of spirituality in music?

'Course not. Again, a lot of people will laugh at me when I say it, but I really am trying to do that. I'm struggling because as yet I haven't met anyone who I feel I can work with. I'm lucky that I've got an immense amount of energy internally. I do feel like I've got almost enough energy to bypass the fact that other people aren't fueling me. But on my own, somehow, I am trying to put together some sort of ascendant thing. That's what I've always valued in music — being taken up. I'm not religious, in the sense of attending church or subscribing to one particular religion, but I envy people who are religious and can stay within it, because I know that they must feel better than I do. It gives a point. There's a meaning to it all. And our science culture has robbed us of that completely.



PRINCE

"The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker" from Sign 'O' The Times (Paisley Park/Warners)

[When vocal stars] Prince, obviously. It's just not quite the Prince that I know.

He's obviously been listening to Electro and totally twisted it. He also plays every instrument on the album.

Yeah, Prince was an all-round rouser.

Your new LP features you playing all the instruments?

Yeah, it's all me, layer by layer. Everything on that LP was always kicked off by the drums. I'd just sit there for four minutes and play, and try to form a structure by listening to it. Then start fiddling around with it, edit it, loosely try to get an idea of what could happen, and then bang on a keyboard and see what happens.

You record quickly?

On yeah — it was all recorded fucking quickly. I spent a bit more time in production. But this [track] is an interesting one. When I was young, Prince was one of those people who was always on the periphery — I could never quite relax and get into him. I can hear a lot of Betty Davis [wife of Miles] — that dark, sexual, really quite tease seduction aspect. That's the element that gets me most about his stuff. He's not scared about being [like that] — it's hovering between being a sexy man and a sexy woman [laughs]. That's the bit which I get into most, because I'm into perverts, definitely. I think I'm completely perverted myself, actually.

How does that express itself?

[Laughs] In ways which I'd better not talk about. But with Prince, he's very much the zeiggeist — he's always flown with the times. He's always got a spin on pop which is relevant. Even with Housey Garage stuff in 1990, I remember all that. But it's a bit too normal for me, to really get me going. 'Phwoar, who is this geezer, what is he up to?' It's a bit too clear for me — I wish it was more perverted. There's definitely room for more perversion in music [laughs].

THROBBING GRISTLE

"Catholic Sex" from *Journey Through A Body*
(Grey Area Of Mate)

[Listens for several minutes] Their attitude to composition is really music concrete, even disregarding the steady rhythm.

This is completely improvised, apparently.

[There are] found sounds, not strung together randomly, there certainly seems to be an order in there, which is why I suppose in my head I attributed it to music concrete. But this is very strange. I reckon it's definitely 80s. I reckon it's 84.

A little earlier — it's Throbbing Gristle, from 1984. Is it Throbbing Gristle? I was going to say, it's got a bit of a Coil sound.

Good guess — Coil's Peter "Sleazy" Christopherson is one of the musicians.

That early 80s Industrial thing, I do actually genuinely find it scary — it does intimidate me. Coil's the man thing that I would relate to this, and that stuff has got a brutality which couldn't have happened in the 90s. It's got an 80s darkness, that's how I see stuff like this. Am I right in thinking that these people were all art school related?

Genesis P-Orridge was involved in British Faxxus happenings in the early 70s... You went to art school, didn't you?

Yeah, I went to Chelsea, actually I dropped out before it finished. It was one of the biggest anticlimaxes of my life, absolutely dismal. I was trying to do sonic art and experimental notation — I was really interested for a period in John Cage. More from his intellectual standpoint, the results of his music were not necessarily as pleasing as reading his dialogue. And I thought, this is going to be such terrible ground.

Did you get anywhere at all with this?

No, I had quite a job convincing my tutors that doing any kind of sonic art was relevant. Out of sheer frustration, I ended up playing a live piece of music in a gallery. Everyone else had stuck things on the wall, and I thought I'd take my studio down there. It just went nowhere. It hardly introduced a dialogue about music — [people said] We don't understand this, it's just entertainment, it's not art; and that was it [laughs]. Very sad, actually. I just had drum machines and mixer and played an improvised piece for half an hour. It actually appealed to get the most reaction from people who went, which was cool, but I wasn't quite confident enough in my standing in the art college to convince the people who were running it to support me. And consequently I left.

[Now] music seems a far more democratic mode of operation. Music is about reproduction — reproducing hundreds of copies, however many copies people want — and the concept of the 'original' is a long way away. Anyone who wants my music can hear it as well as I can hear it. There's no difference between my DAT copy and a CD of it. I still feel this [attitude] lingering on within the art school set-up. This is the original, and this is a gallery, and when we put things in galleries, it means a lot. One of Cage's points is that the moment is the most important thing, and once it's gone, it's thin air.

POLYGON WINDOW

"Supremacy II" from *Surfing On Sine Waves*
(Warp)

[Immediately] Oh, Aphex Twin. [Laughs] Polygon Window Which track?

Is it "Quixote"? Oh, "Supremacy II". I never really remember track titles of anyone's music. This stuff was completely mindblowing when I first heard it.

Richard James amusingly described his first meeting with you on his sleeve notes to your debut album *Feed Me Weird Things*. Was it an accurate account?

It's pretty similar. Aphex made a large impact on me from the first time I heard him. The people I idolised from the past were creative people who seemed on a tangent, but Aphex was creating a similar sort of impact in real time. Most of the music I enjoy is from the past, but Aphex, when he streamlined it into the whole Techno scene, suddenly rendered most of the scene completely bland and meaningless, because it was so colourful. Can you put your finger on exactly what that quality was?

Well, the thing which fires me off on most music which I love: a way of making anger and happiness meaningful, capturing it and communicating it. Instead of things that are all-out blasts, and maybe because I'm English, I like the sound of controlled rage. A lot of this stuff sounded to me tense, but able to flow as well.

There's a lot of anger in Aphex Twin as well?

Yeah, I think we all have [anger], but most of us don't know how to harness it, and make it anything more culturally important than road rage [laughs]. That seems to be the main manifestation.

What was it like hanging out with him in North London a few years ago?

It was a bit of a changing point for me, because suddenly [here was someone I knew who was one of the creators of my musical history, one of the people who had set it up]. That was very strange, because they share all the same flaws and problems that I'm sure plague most people. It's just that by some fluke of development, they've been able to tune in and phase out interference.

It was [an] extremely hectic [period], and when we first met, the rage I was talking about was intensified, doubled three times over. It was like a conversation, actually, going between us, from 95-97. It wasn't like we were trying to better each other, or at least if it was, we never came out in the open about it. We were just like, 'Oh yeah, man, that's wicked', and then turn up the next week with another DAT. 'Check out our' [laughs]. But it was brilliant. I don't see him so much now; I live in Sheffield. That period's definitely over, and he's concerned with different things to me now.

Such as?

Every time I see him he seems to be programming computers. I'm not so sure if he's concerned with music anymore — I don't know.

IANNIS XENAKIS

"5.709" from *Electronic Music* (Electronic Music Foundation)

Any idea which side of the fence this comes from — academic computer composition or 'the street'?

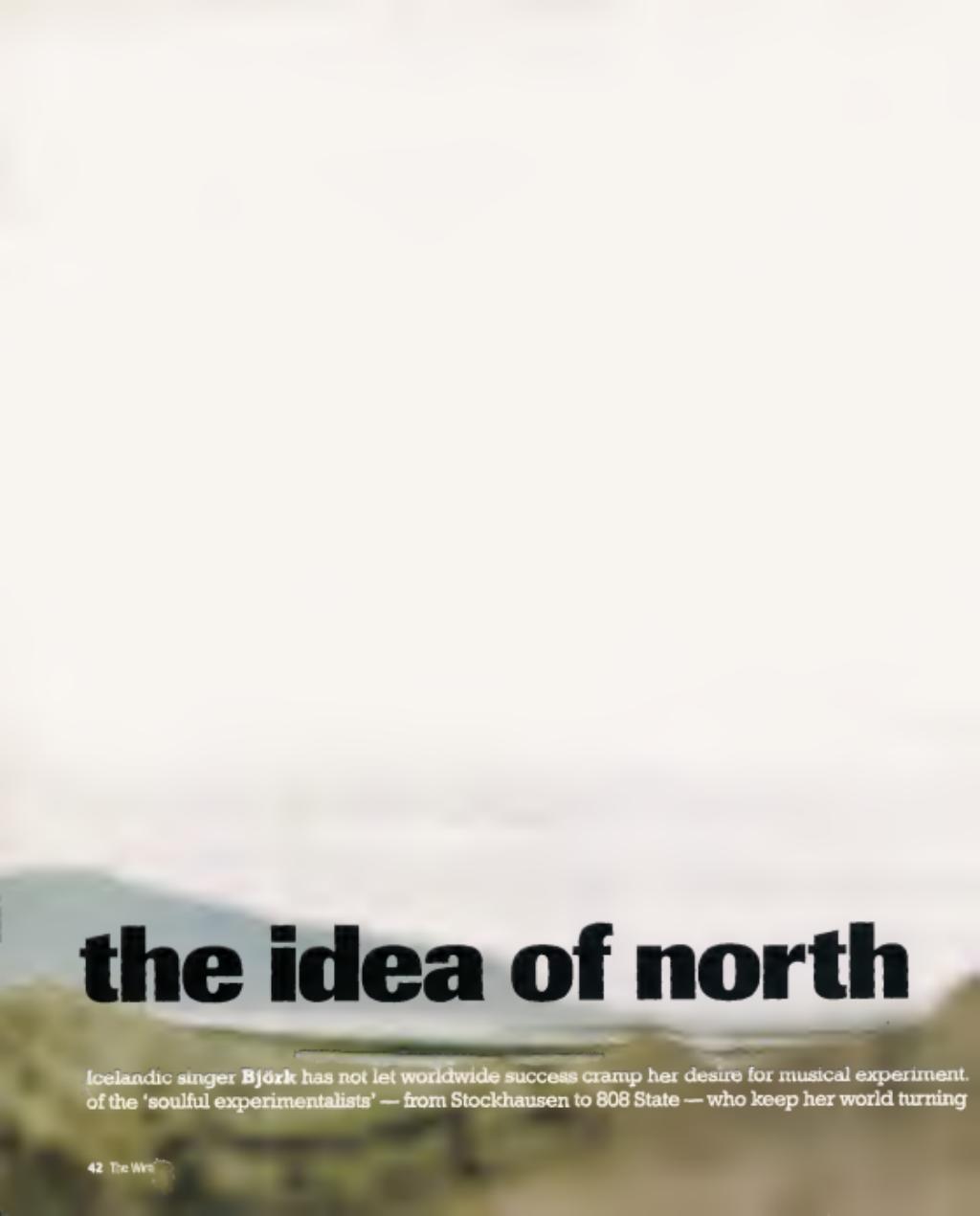
[After listening for a while] Well, it's very difficult, isn't it? For some reason or other, the first thing that popped into my head was Iannis Xenakis.

That's right. It's from 1992 — some of his recent experiments with software. His approach fascinates me — the spatial element of his music. He's really relating sound to space. He was an architect, wasn't he? The idea of writing a piece of music in relation to the particular resonant and acoustic dimensions of a room, or a hall or theatre... it's very appealing.

The noise element of this piece could conceivably have come from a bedroom type musician as well, couldn't it?

Yeah, I was wondering... the slumbering timer of sounds — I suppose what Aphex and me ended up doing was barking at music concrete, in a backdoor sort of way. These two things are from completely different circumstances. One music is formed in the embrace of an institution, and one music is street kids saying, 'This is our sound, man — whatever' [laughs]. And the intellectual disparity is absolutely huge.

Musique concrete seemed unreadable for a long time, and now it's being cited by all kinds of younger mixers... Yeah, ripping it up. But once we look at it in any great depth, we see that the links are there to be made, and they're meaningful. Like gamelan music, something which has grown up in isolation from our Western heritage. And yet we've come to a point now where I can see parallels, and it's spooky. Because this is music that really has a very hermetic background. People are producing Techno with no idea of gamelan, and yet it's happening — the synchronicity is continually fascinating people are doing things from different starting points, but ending up barking up the same tree... 



the idea of north

Icelandic singer Björk has not let worldwide success cramp her desire for musical experiment. Of the 'soulful experimentalists' — from Stockhausen to 808 State — who keep her world turning



On the contrary, she has used her fame to raise the profile
Words: Louise Gray. Photography: Frank Bauer



Lucky old Iceland: in recent months, two of its most famous children have returned to its shores. One of them stands on front of me, balancing on the rocks along the stony boundaries of Reykjavik harbour, humming into the wind, seemingly indifferent to the torrent below. It's Björk Guðmundsdóttir, having her photograph taken. The other is Keiko, aka Freed Willy, the killer whale of movie legend, who has been getting a frostier reception: "Killer whales bite the tongues off nice whales, then play with them," claims one of Björk's assistants indignantly, as a small rockfall slides into the sea. "And there was the American press romanticising the whole thing!"

Reykjavik is a small city, and the bright, cold air doesn't make for loitering. Of the few passers-by who notice that it's Björk out there on the rocks, hardly any of them give her a second glance. You begin to understand why Iceland's most famous export has come home. In an interesting reversal of the fame game, she is afforded most privacy in the one place in the world where she is best known — 22 years in the business made her a household name even before international acclaim chimed in.

Born in 1964, Björk's career started prodigiously early. She recorded her first album aged just 11. Principally a collection of folk songs, it also contained the first Björk original, an instrumental tribute to Icelandic artist Johannes Kával. She went on to play in the prankster punk group Exodus, Tappi Tíkatlaas (delightfully translated as 'Cork The Bitch's Ansej') and Kukl. When their occult anarchopunk looked like settling into a fixed pattern, Kukl self-immolated, like all decent punk groups should. And when the smoke died down, Björk and fellow conspirator Einar Órn rose from the ashes of their blackness dressed in the brighter primary colours of The Sugarcubes. Comprising a sextet of poets and musicians organised around an art lab idea — they formed the publishing and recording collective Bad Taste — they recast themselves as a pop group, albeit one that recognised none of pop's usual limitations. Their debut single 'Birthday' was released in 1987, the year before Acid House was to sweep across Europe. It was a post-rock affair before the concept was invented, infected with funk, and as such it sealed the burgeoning alliance between rock, dance and dreampop. But Björk's voice was the disc's real revelation: it was at once pure-like and operatic-sized, and even as it sounded untempered and un tutored, it effortlessly led the song through its every whoop and leap. For all The Sugarcubes' collective talents, the singer was undoubtedly the one to watch. And so it turned out: Sugarcubes disintegrated after three albums — *Life's Too Good, Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week and Sock Around For Joy* — but their Bad Taste art collective still thrives, championing an impressive amount of Icelandic literature, legends and music, ranging from new groups such as Útnaut and Sigrun Rós, to contemporary composers such as Thorleif Sigurðsson and Sveinn Ludvík Björnsson.

Once solo, Björk began a long term studio relationship with Massive Attack programmer Nellee Hooper and BOB State's Graham Massey, and musicians Taini Singh and Marcus De Vries. Her first album *Début*, a year in the making, launched Björk as the 90s' least likely superstar. Well, can you name another with roots buried deep in Icelandic occult anarchopunk syndicalism, who champions the music of Stockhausen and Arvo Pärt in her spare time?

And now, after several years in London, where fame became an unnegotiable burden, she's back in Iceland. It may not guarantee anonymity, but it offers the kind of balance of ordinariness and secrecy that she can call home.

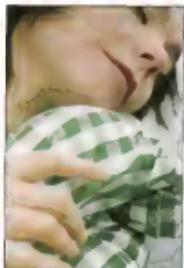
"I thought I could organise freedom/How Scandinavian of me" — Björk, "Hunter"

This tension between home and not-home is the theme of Björk's latest single, "Hunter", taken from her third solo album *Homogenic* (1997). It's an extraordinary, mesmeric song comprising growling martial beats, swooping strings that merge Andeanian heat with a frostier clime, and a vocal that oscillates between steely-edged determination and uncontaminated freedom. Its video treatment, in which a bald Björk morphs between human and polar bear, is no less extraordinary. Directed by Paul White, longtime art director to The Sugarcubes and Björk, the video's post-production work at James Cameron's studios, brought the costs up to £250,000. Surprisingly, given its special effects budget, it is deeply affecting. In the muffled surroundings of a hotel cafe, Björk offers a brief synopsis: "You leave home, you travel, go nuts and then the moment comes where you've hunted enough experiences and you realise that you could sit down in this house, with these people and be fine for the rest of your life. It's about a moment like that," she pauses, clicking her fingers at the decisive point. "It's about the argument between hunting experiences and stopping and setting."

"Hunter" also tackles shape-changing, the idea of transmogrification that is the core of shamanic power. You sense that magic is very much alive in Iceland, a country that has a stronger affinity than most with its literary and mythological past. Shape-changing is also at the heart of Björk's creative process, insofar as she promotes a state of flux to keep her songs alive. "What you have to do, just to keep sane, is document certain moments I do it with songs. Five per cent are on the albums, the rest are personal ones I'd never show to anyone. The documentation can be so strong, they get a life of their own. It doesn't happen very often, but take 'Isobel' [from *Post*]. It's got almost nothing to do with me any more."

While she was out roadtesting her third album, *Homogenic*, with a full group, The Icelandic String Octet and LFO's Mark Bell on live beats, Björk remarked how their concerts really took off when the internal life of the music took over. Each song would peak at different times through the tour. She recalls, "The whole experience was extremely lush, after all those years of dreaming of creating some sort of ideal situation on stage and not being able to, mostly because of not having the ability as a band leader and not having good enough songs. Now I've got 'good enough' songs from three albums to do a whole gig, plus we had the octet and Mark. It was the first time that people from the album also played live. This tour was just harvest time for me, you plant a lot of seeds and then it just all comes harvest!"

Seeing how Iceland only heard its first symphony orchestra within living memory, the richness of its late 20th century musical harvest has been nothing short of remarkable. As Bad Taste's Ásí Jónasson acknowledges, "I feel it's rather weird that we get something that's unique and yet totally Icelandic. Something that doesn't imitate trends and yet is accepted, especially by foreigners. This factor, this capacity to pass barriers, is a most important one in the Icelandic scene."



The worldwide success of Björk's *Debut* might make it the 90s pop album par excellence, but nobody could have predicted just how big it would become. There are few antecedents for so musically adventurous an album setting the popular imagination so totally. Though her subsequent albums may have pushed the envelope even further, *Debut* remains her most daring release. The album sashayed between dance music and full scale ballads, but its sounds and textures were drawn from the world beyond dance music. It showcased her gift for combining different musical forces, with the help of her dance orientated producers Hooper and Mossey. Her remit was evidently a wide one: Drawing from her own classical background (she studied piano and flute) and an abiding interest in contemporary composers Stockhausen and Messiaen (experimentalists with soul, she believes), she has been able to unite several areas of music. Her compositional method is more a connective activity than crossover fusion.

"I'm like a transpopter," says Björk. "I'm the biggest music fan there is. I'm like ill for life, like I could be arrested for it. It's sick. I just could talk snare drum sounds for hours. I'm just ill. My grandparents listened to jazz and I was in a classical music school for ten years. My mother and stepfather listened to — for want of a better word — hippy music, so I was the odd one out in each group. I used to say to the classical people, 'Come and listen to this jazz'." I was a bit of a David Attenborough, an explorer figure, saying, "You've got all these green dots, but what about the pink ones?"

After a brief, considered pause, she continues, "I think style is rubbish, really. I think Stockhausen or Borey M are aiming for the same target, they just don't agree with the methods on how to get there."

And what is her target? Björk gives a quiet answer, like she is imparting a secret or revealing the vulnerability that follows the voicing of the extraordinary. "It's a surrender to nature, I guess. It's just a place where everything falls into place, where logic doesn't get in the way."

"I just think there's so much abstract stuff going on in daily life. You talk to people, but that's only one per cent of what the communication is really about. There's all this sub-meaning, and music is the only thing that can cover all that without being complicated. It's a tough one — all the phrases I know I don't like. It's just a way to get into the middle of yourself. So often you fall over and don't feel connected. A song can be a way of getting there."

Throughout our encounter, it is clear that Björk is battling with exhaustion. That's not to say she's not attentive — she is, with a directness that's warming — but schedules take their toll. The night before she'd flown in late from Denmark, where she had been meeting with the Danish film director Lars von Trier (*Element Of Crime*, *Breaking The Waves*). He had been impressed; it is reported, by Björk's stage and vocal presence. She, in turn, was a fan of *Breaking The Waves*. As well as writing the music for his forthcoming musical comedy film, *Dancer In The Dark*, Björk has the starring role as an East European ingenue who goes looking for the Hollywood dream. She's already in Iceland's Greenhouse Studios working on the soundtrack and laying down beats and initial ideas for her next album, scheduled for late 1999. Engineers Volger and Markus Dravs are already on board, as is arranger Eumir Deodato and the Icelandic String Octet, but it's too early, she says, to predict what

song will go where in the film.

"I'm experimenting loads, making mosaics and layers ... I'm looking forward to writing songs for another person my film character, though I like to exist on different levels and there's less exposure here. It allows me to stand back, be more of a craftsman."

As her voice tails off, the shifts in her accent indicate the depth of her fatigue. Most of the time, her English is highly fluent, peppered with expressive idioms and rhythmical cadences. As we sit in the gloomy pre-war splendour of Hotel Borg's cafe, Björk switches continually between Icelandic and English as local friends spot her. The Icelandic staccato "Takk, takk", meaning thanks, punctuates the conversation. A chamber orchestra starts up in the next room, and for half an hour, the world is a babble of noises and languages.

In 1989, writer Eva Hoffman published an insightful and lyrical memoir entitled *Lost In Translation* (Minerva Press). The story of her childhood spent in post-war Poland and her family's subsequent transplantation to Canada and the USA, it describes, essentially, how a subject is split by the operation of language in a complete inversion of Gertrude Stein's certainty ("A rose is a rose is a rose"). The Polish Hoffman is not the Canadian Hoffman. They are forever separate people. "The problem is," she writes, "that the signifier has become severed from the signified. The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue." *River* in Polish was a vital sound, ennobled with the essence of overhood, of myness, of being immersed in rivers. *River* in English is cold — a word without aura. It has no accumulated associations ... and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke."

"I never do interviews in Icelandic," says Björk, echoing Eva Hoffman's theme. "It's just too sacred to me. It's just too close."

What, not even with Icelandic journalists?

"I never do interviews here. I decided to make an effort when I was 20 to communicate. I started going abroad with The Sugarcubes. I started singing in English and doing interviews and it's like the language of ... I can do an interview in English and pretend to know it all, but I don't really. When I say this, I'm not lying to you, when I talk to you in English it's — arragh! — a tough one."

Icelandic is not a language that Björk uses much in the studio. While her early recordings with Tappa Tikkimass and Kuki were in her native tongue, by the time The Sugarcubes came along, English had become her professional language. It has remained so ever since the incidence of her using her first tongue, such as for "Varf Vatnsdæ-Ros," on Hector Zazou's *Songs From The Cold Seas*, are few and far between. (On one notable occasion in America, The Sugarcubes performed an entire concert in Icelandic, prompting one exasperated spectator to shout, "Speak English!", to which one of the group responded, "Learn Icelandic!"). The separation of a person through the language they use is not only a form of alienation, but also a way of protecting her or her core. If Icelandic is too sacred a language, then does English become a third party, a transitional space, in which to test the waters?

"Yes, but I always write my songs in some sort of gibberish, which is my own language. It's just ... whatever. They'll always be Icelandic words there that I can pick out and try to discover what the song is actually about. Then afterwards, I can



put on my logical head and make an English lyric. Do you follow me?" Björk pulls herself up short, looking concerned. "I didn't mean to hurt you if it feels like I am pretending I'm not. [Language] is just one place that's being saved. It's like you're in your house you comb your hair, brush your teeth, put your coat on, open the door and then you're ready to meet people. That's English to me. Icelandic is like invade my house. Both worlds are important to me, but I'm not lying outside my house. Am I an Icelandic singer? No, because there is no specific Icelandic sound as such. There never has been. Yes, because I'm influenced by the humour, the mountains, the fact that I'm in a cosmopolitan city, but I can walk for five minutes and be on my own and sing at the top of my voice. Engineers still freak out today because they don't know how to microphone my voice. I learnt to sing acoustically."

Language is a notably ambiguous topic with Björk. Musical or verbal, language is simultaneously a vehicle of emotional truth, a cloaking device, a trickster process. At a second meeting, this time at a restaurant close to her London flat, a more rested Björk explains in these terms her encounter-cum-interview in 1996 with her childhood hero Stockhausen. Introduced to his music as a young adolescent while at music school in Reykjavík, Stockhausen's immediate appeal to her was his electronic music. On closer inspection, Björk found his practices a liberating experience. Written up as an extended Q&A session for a British style magazine, Björk cut to the chase with Stockhausen and the resulting piece — covering everything from the technicalities of his music to its relationship with mystery — showed a real engagement with his ideas.

"I thought if there's one person I'd like to introduce to young English readers it was Stockhausen," says Björk. "You know, these younger listeners who are obsessed with Electronica and think The Human League inverted it. Stockhausen was such a pioneer for that language. There aren't many people who are larger than life, and yet he's one of them. The whole century is in his life. Germany's musical heritage, the Nazi period, personal and global tragedy. [After 1945], he had to completely rediscover his own musical language to make something that was going to be relevant, and I think that's very, very brave. It's also very optimistic. It took a complete disaster, an emotional breakdown, to push him there."

Did his attitude towards experimentation rub off on Björk? "Not with my singing," she replies. "No help comes in there. I just sing what I want to sing and I'm quite happy with the limitations my vocal chords give me. I'm human and I can only be

what I am today, a 32 year old Icelandic woman, single mother, with the experiences I've got. I can't pretend that I'm a 50 year old businessman. I don't think it's much discovering new instruments as it is about being more open-minded in the way you use the existing ones. That's where I'm at."

While it's possible to talk about Björk's distinctive vocalising in terms of certain trends in classical music (she recently performed Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Sprechstimme), it's in her studio work that her curiosity and knowledge of experimental music really shows through. The lush soundscapes of *Délir* and the fractured sounds of *Post* and its remixed sibling *Télégrón*, were just tasters behind Homogenic; there's an assemblage of technique and intent that links Björk and her

collaborators of recent years —Tricky, Goldie, Mika Vaino of Pan Sonic, Howe B. percussionist Evelyn Glennie — to older innovators such as Cage, Alvin Lucier and La Monte Young. A wider listening shows, too. The uncluttered harmonies of Arvo Part (whom Björk recently charmed into the ground during a TV interview) certainly shine through. Asked what Part's music means to her, Björk is admirably succinct: "A proof that the sublime exists."

While she's reluctant to talk about her own place in the scheme of things ("I can't see my music from the outside," she says), she's quick to identify the current desire for a more numinous music. "Maybe 20th century music is about a move from the head to the heart. There's this bringing out of spirituality not just in Part, Górecki and so on, but in dance music, too. Music of the people. In clubs, you have these moments of the divine. People do these minimal electronics, and it's like a net for spirituality. It's a very risky road, though, because if you only have one or two notes, it doesn't work. It's like the emperor's new clothes, the whole song will collapse."

Working with the Octet has reaped dividends. Much of *Homogenic* is characterised by a spaciousness that the strings somehow define. She acknowledges the way exposure to this kind of work has helped her develop a greater capacity for experimentation.

"Of course, otherwise it would be pointless," she concludes. "Every minute I spend away from Reykjavík is time wasted, as far as I'm concerned. It's a sacrifice I'm making for music. So for me to come here and make the same album as I did last time would be a complete waste of time. But it's also simply about courage and learning, about having the courage to be innocent somewhere." □ "Hunter" is our now on One Little Indian. Björk tours the UK this month; see Our There.





Rico cheting between avant rock, wired Country, free music summits and banjo recitals of Bach, virtuoso guitarist and arch prankster **Eugene Chadbourne** is the American underground's most disruptive presence. Words: Ben Watson. Photography: Amy & Tanveer

hobo trails and boho trials

Eugene Chadbourne isn't an easy artist to describe. Born in 1954 and raised in Boulder, Colorado, he took up guitar after seeing The Beatles on the Ed Sullivan TV show. That sounds straightforward enough, but listing the styles he uses — folk protest and free improvisation, feedback noisecore and virtuoso picking, Country & Western and free jazz — comes across so wittily contradictory, so ludicrously incompatible, that he can seem merely perverse, as if vying for outre' cachet. His prolific recorded output is packed with freeform guitar, jokes, satire, snide political comment, noise scares and bizarre chaos — you'll recall Chadbourne was the prankster who released an "ethnological documentation" named *Country Music In The World Of Islam* the year before the Gulf War.

When he played at Bemby's Winebar in West London in October, he astonished his audience by whipping out some sheet music and playing scores by Bach and Monk on his banjo, not for comic effect, but immaculately, and then with more edge than any neotalent. It's certainly not quite what you'd expect from the master of free shockrock agit-Metal, the anarcho improvisor who claims to have invented the electric rake (a contact-milled garden rake scraped on the wall and ceiling, a memorable crowd pleaser!) Is all this weirdness simply schlock? Time to investigate.

The insect buzz

The problem with Chadbourne's vast output is, where do you begin? It was the way the ensemble music on his recent Leo release, *Insect Attractor*, leapt out of his trademark twangs, buzzes and interference that renewed this listener's enthusiasm for his bempronged assault on dourly classicism and rock romanticism. Here was someone deploying improvisors to create fantastic music, releasing albums worth recommending. As with many a Chadbourne project, however, scrambled presentation can obscure the finer details of its construction. Distracted by the drawings of insects and the jokes scrawled across the 'scores' reproduced on the CD booklet, I mistook the music for

edited improvisations rather than "proper" compositions. Oops.

"I have to ask you why you described *Insect Attractor* as you did [in *The Wire* 176]?" Chadbourne contests. "You make it sound like it's improvised music that's edited. It's not, it's composed. The material the oboe player plays in 'The Cricket In My Life' is completely notated. There are variations in how it can be played and how it can be combined, it's a thing she works with, but there's a lot of notated material. With 'Mourning Of The Preying Mantises' I liked so many of the solos from various performances I'd taped, that I decided to string a whole lot of them together."

"I've always been a big fan of solos," he continues. "I love hearing groups where somebody 'takes a solo', it's very very nice. One thing that might be lacking in improvised music where everyone's always active is that you don't have solos. So I edited all the material together."

And then found a record label prepared to release these fraudulent, digitally manipulated non-documents?

"Yes!" he replies. "Sometimes you get somebody running a record company, like Leo Feigin, who has the insight to realise this is interesting. Somebody else might say, 'I can't release this, there's a difference in the ambience between the recordings you've spliced together!'. There's an incredible difference! One moment you're in a huge room, then you're in a tiny place with cars driving by. To me that really appeals, it's like some weird trip. Some people are really anal retentive: 'What shall we do with this scratchy noise because the amplifier burped?' Well, if you've got somebody that wants to sit on a computer and remove that scratchy noise, feel free, I'm not going to cry because that's not there. But to me, it's there, it's on the tape, who gives a shit? It's not like it doesn't blend in. That's what I like about this area of music: my sound blends in."

But why the bizarre, unprofessional looking scores?

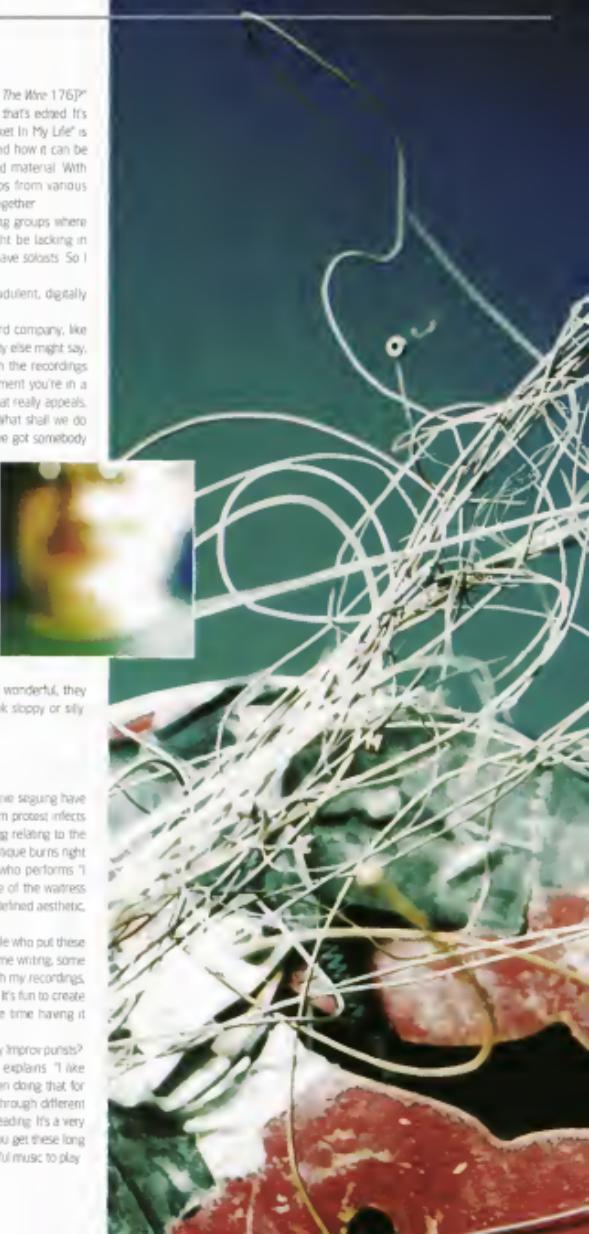
"You have to think about what's the purpose of written music," answers Chadbourne. "It's the way you're communicating with these other musicians. I used to laugh about how looking forward and squinting at the score is an important part of the performance. Anything you write, even if it's not something that someone plays, it affects the communication. Look at these Saxe scores with instructions you don't tell the audience, like 'play as if you have a cloud moving through your ear'. These comments are wonderful, they really affect the performance. Sometimes, by making the score look sloppy or silly you get people to relax. It's a kind of trick."

Hobo aesthetics

Manipulative or not, Chadbourne's untidy album covers and interruptive seguing have a scummy, hobo feel — a kind of baggperson obsessiveness. Subaltern protest infects the very forms he uses. It's hard to see a media bloke like Billy Bragg relating to the rubbish montage of dadast Kurt Schwitters, with Chadbourne, left critique burns right through the art, singing all representative systems. He's the guy who performs "I Hate The Man Who Runs This Bar" — detailing the landlord's abuse of the waitress and his wife — in the bar he's singing about. Chadbourne has a defined aesthetic, but its hostility to high art sheen is manifest in every cracked detail.

"Many years ago Village Voice compared what I did with these people who put these signs up on lampposts in New York, just filling every inch of it with some writing, some political diatribe, they fill the corners in. They said I was doing that with my recordings, that made me laugh. That became part of my point of view after that. It's fun to create an appearance of it being completely deranged and at the same time having it function very smoothly."

What about playing Bach and Monk from a score? Is that just to annoy Improv purists? "When I got into Bach, I was led into it via Charlie Parker," he explains. "I like practising from the Charlie Parker book of written-out solos. I've been doing that for years. You get these really beautiful melodic lines moving around through different keys, a lot of these really beautiful blues licks too. It got me into sightreading. It's a very enjoyable, relaxing thing, to play music like that. Bach is very similar, you get these long streams of 16th notes, these melodic things moving around, it's beautiful music to play



"When Jacques Loussier plays Bach on guitar, it's totally smooth. The banjo sounds a little like a harpsichord, so I think it's really suited to the baroque material. As the harmonic thing moves, it gets to a point where the banjo won't get down that low, so you have to go up above, so you get these jumps which are kind of like Eric Dolphy."

It's useful to hear Chadbourne explain himself as, from where he's sitting, his eclectic procedures aren't at all absurd or contradictory. Indeed, the contrary is true: what's really perverse is a commodity culture that slots music into boxes marked entertainment, art or protest. For Chadbourne, great music — from Coltrane to Hendrix to Derek Bailey — is inevitably at three at once. Single hobo Chadbourne's meat-the-audience presentations certainly have a scorching political edge that tends to go missing when improvisations abstract, an space pretensions take over. To comment on President Clinton's little problem, for instance, Chadbourne close-miked a fly zipper to create a "noise" event, with expert wrist action bringing the resulting hubbub to a musical climax. A Chadbourne gig reconfigures your preconceptions: fun is freed from apolitical banality, avant garde experiment becomes war on commercial alienation, instrumental virtuosity no longer seems oppressive and mystifying.

The Shockability years

Eugene Chadbourne is a product of the 60s counterculture — Captain Beefheart, marijuana, Phil Ochs, anti-Vietnam war protests, John Coltrane — who heard Anthony Braxton and Derek Bailey and flipped. This is the voice of truth in a world choking on media bullshit! After releasing a couple of purist free improvisation albums of solo guitar on his own Parachute label (recently remastered on CD), he and John Zorn fused punk and Improv into caterwauling challenges to both audiences — when they had an audience at all. After working on the fringes of free jazz in New York in the early 80s — a fictional, productive period now called No Wave — Chadbourne formed a band called Shockably. Signed to Rough Trade, they had an identity that meant something to rock listeners and even sold some records.

Shockably disintegrated into the usual rock talk of exhausting tours and managerial rip-offs. These experiences mean Chadbourne's criticisms of post-rock and Electronica are not just the grumblings of some art snob who never wanted to play for the great unwashed in the first place. A spell as a journalist interviewing jazz musicians for Coda taught him about survival, money matters, copyright. When he explains the advantages of cult status, it's not as if he hasn't considered the alternatives.

Taxing the imagination

"When you tell people you're a musician they wonder why they've never heard of you. I always say it's because I haven't murdered anyone! It's actually liberating to be successful on a small scale where no one has heard of you. If nobody's heard of you, you can't get in trouble for the stuff that you do. Culturode is a great example, that record they put out there where they're making fun of all these records playing in the background and singing along with them [Culturode's *Tacky Souvenirs Of Pre-Revolutionary America*. Nobody ever sued them because it was on a really small scale. With a lot of the people in the bigtime music business, the gross is enormous, but the actual amount of money they might put in their pocket is less than someone like me, because there are so many people paid to do things they could do themselves. Like, when I toured with The Violent Femmes, they might have eight people working for them, so they have a lot of leisure time. The main reason that money is spent on these people, though, is because if it was put in an individual's pocket, it would just go on taxes. So you get all these people working for you, and that's better than handing it over to Uncle Sam. The next question is, is there any point in earning that much money if you can't keep it? The only point is that you're employing people." Bela Fleck is the industry's king of bangs — but even he says all his money goes on his tour bus. It's all about prestige.

Going electric

Mega dollar success doesn't guarantee an audience that actually listens to what you're saying. Chadbourne says, "I heard a tape of a Neil Young concert where he was doing a solo tour of the East Coast, an isolated string of dates; it was a very special thing, 40 or 50 bucks to get in. Neil says, 'This is a brand new song I wrote last night,' and the whole audience talked through it because it wasn't something they'd heard before! These are people who paid 50 bucks a ticket to see Neil Young, who's one of the most popular rock musicians in the world. Even he doesn't have an audience who is willing to listen to a new song!"

Some writers cite Bob Dylan or Miles Davis as proof that the key to combining musical innovation and popular outreach is electricity. I asked Chadbourne what he thought of Davis's turn to abstraction with *Bitches Brew*.

"I liked the electric jazz when it first came in," he confesses, "but it got corny really fast. There was a dividing line even between one *Mahavishnu* album and the next Chick Corea degenerated really quickly. Even some of the Miles Davis stuff with all the electric guitars that people like so much now, at the time we didn't really like it. We were critical of the guitar players and we thought it was nothing compared to Derek Bailey or Hendrix even. We just thought it was cheesy — aggressive and show-offy. I still have problems with somebody like Bela Fleck. Harmonically it's too simple, it never goes in a direction that you don't expect, which was not what I liked about jazz. I

liked Herbie Hancock's *Sextet* records, but I didn't like his big funky hit, "Chameleon", I thought that was awful. I used to make fun of that at the time. We were punks!"

Even so, Chadbourne doesn't subscribe to free improvisation's insistence on abstraction, its taboo on tunes and entertainment. He befriended keyboard jester Steve Beresford after Chicago trumpeter Leo Smith warned him off playing with "that lunatic".

"There was this guy," Chadbourne recalls, "a kind of Derek Bailey figure in Toronto, Larry Dubin, a very wonderful drummer, very similar to Bailey's style. He had been a traditional Dixieland drummer for years, and then he went kind of wild and got into Improv stuff. His wife tried to have him put in a mental institution because he used to sit and play along with her when she was washing dishes — 'I'd rather do this than play in the Dixieland band!' And she was saying, 'How are you going to make a living?'

"Larry got leukemia and he didn't want anyone to see him in hospital because he was dying. You could call him on the phone. The last time I spoke to him I was there with John Zorn. We were doing some improvised pieces and some compositions we'd written and we played some standards. I called Larry and he'd gotten some report on the concert, and he said, 'I heard you played some tunes?' Really disgusted, he said [death rattle whisper] 'Don't play tunes!' And as for the C&W stuff, there was a backlash, a pressure not to do it, which was so irritating."

Punchlines not hooklines

Chadbourne's songs are effective vehicles, with rotating points of view that keep surprising the listener. At Benny's Winebar, he answered a request for "Breaking The Law Every Day", what starts out as dope-smoker's defiance pans out into satire on TV evangelist sexual hypocrisy and Attorney General corruption: everyone's breaking the law every day but only the innocent get caught. It's rare to hear political diatribes that pack so much wit, the songs even come with equipped with punchlines. Chadbourne's politics communicate, people get the point I asked him where that came from:

"The idea of having a humorous political song, or something sentimental and very moving that gives people relief — all that I got from seeing Phil Ochs live," he says. "You could say it came from Bob Dylan, but I never saw him perform live. Phil Ochs was more accessible, he actually came and performed in the university ballroom where you could see him very clearly. It had this soothing effect because we were very agitated about the politics back then. You hear these humorous songs — "Here's To The State Of Richard Nixon" — it really made you laugh. And then there were the moving ones — "There But For Fortune" — wonderful messages."

The cassette virus

Chadbourne's assault on product impersonality extends to the media he uses for releases. Everyone else is taking digital and Internet; his preference is analogue cassettes. Quite unconsciously, he's mimicking the samizdat culture of pre-89 Eastern Europe and today's Africa (with little copyright enforcement, Western record companies cannot make profits there; singers emerge as stars due to their tapes being duplicated so often). Chadbourne is creating a discographical challenge of Sun Ra dimensions:

"I like making cassettes because the music industry can't deal with it," he smirks. "It's very difficult to get a cassette reviewed anywhere, meaning you can amass a whole body of music nobody has ever written about. No one can keep track of what you've actually done. People tell me that I'm upsetting the discographers. When they write me for information, I always send them some misleading things, just to see if I can get it printed and create confusion. I've got this tape series and no one can figure what's been released, no one has written about it. It exists without all the bullshit you get."

Chadbourne's prodigious output might match that of his longtime colleague Zorn, but his strategically careless cassette dissemination of his work couldn't be further removed from the tasteful Avant/Tradik imprints through which Zorn channels his music.

"Zorn and I have a completely different attitude about recordings at this time," Chadbourne explains. "He's trying to get everything that he's ever done, if possible, and everything he'll ever do, under one umbrella that he controls completely in terms of the recording business. He would like to get the rights to everything and have it on Tradik or Avant. What I like is making hundreds and hundreds of recordings for strange little people with their own little labels, so if you're in country A, you can never find the one from country B. You get these people who are fumbling around looking for them — no one has really heard them all. That's really appealing."

Chadbourne vs Jenkins

On his visit to London, Chadbourne played a gig with guitarist Billy Jenkins, who has been described as his Bromley-born equivalent. Like Chadbourne, Jenkins is a guitar virtuoso, who abandoned the prospect of rock success with his group Burlesque for extensive — and painstakingly documented — adventures in modern music. Chadbourne and Jenkins's highspeed duets at the Pigeons pub on Romford Road, East London, were uncannily empathetic, each musician instantly responding to the other's song choices, their guitars locking like a post-Sun Ra version of The Hot Club De France. Pop and rock and jazz have created an international culture instantly understood by its practitioners. Even a set by Forest Gate's cult heroes Kenny Process Team failed to overshadow this duel of supreme master guitarists. The pair were brought together under the banner of free improvisation — characteristically unpretentious. Chadbourne compares such gigs to the way Chuck Berry plays with pick-up groups:

"Look at the way Chuck Berry works, or Bo Diddley that inspires me," he asserts. "I like the way that Chuck Berry can go anywhere in the world and they know his music, even now. I think that's a really remarkable accomplishment. When The Rolling Stones made that movie about him [*Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll!*], I thought it was weird that anybody so into his music would miss such a central strength of it. The attitude was

that his way of playing with pick-up bands was really awful, and that he should have a really tight band of professionals. So they put one together and of course that ruined his music. There's something great about making things spontaneous. The listening audience thinks it's shocking you can operate like that. I did a gig with this drummer Billy Kettle in Scotland last week, we'd never played together before, but everyone thought we must have. I don't know why, it's not so difficult for musicians to get together and sound like they've played together for years. It's not such a remarkable thing. It's something musicians are able to do that you can draw on. It's great! It means they can be combined in really interesting ways."

Musos — heroes or zeros?

Just because musical skill is frequently shrouded in an aura of boring anti-experimental sanctity does not mean cackhandedness or knob-pushing is necessarily superior. Chadbourne, for one, thinks being a musician is cool:

"There was a drummer I used to work with who quit playing because he said he didn't like the fact that musicians think they're cool," gags Chadbourne in disbelief. "One night, he realised as he approached the stage at the Knitting Factory that everyone was watching him and thinking he was cool as he was the drummer in my band. I thought, 'Well, musicians are cool.' It's nice that people look up to you. You always read this stuff about how in African society, the musician is considered one of the most wonderful people in the village. Well, why not? People like musicians. It does make you cool. I think he's got it all wrong. He's finally doing something that makes him cool and he doesn't want to do it anymore. If people look up to you for playing music, it's great, it's better than looking up to you because you've beaten everyone up in town!"

As a frontline veteran versed in punk, lo-fi and free jazz, Chadbourne's words about some of the newer acts in rock are astute:

"People say to me that it must be easier for me now that we've got this 'post-rock and 'Electronica,'" he reflects. "A lot of this is very young people with not much musical ability creating stuff that sounds kind of weird — and to their friends it seems really, really weird — but eventually they hear other stuff and they think, 'Well, it's not really that weird.' Some of these people might become dedicated to making truly weird music, but they're not really that dedicated yet, it's an initial stage. I hear that, so it's hard for me to listen to it. I know the really weird stuff! I get in this position most with my own kids. I don't want to discourage them, anything they want to listen to, I think it's great. I try not to be cantankerous about it. When my daughter Jenny started getting into Phish, I'm saying, 'Well, listen to these Miles Davis records because that's



what they're doing and this is much better."

"One confrontation we had, and I tried to keep it friendly, was about Medeski, Martin & Wood because she really liked them. I thought this is like the Ramsey Lewis of its day — wimpy piano stuff made to appeal on a lower common denominator. And you get these guys making these comments about how that's better because it 'communicates' easier, and jazz which is too far out or inferior — that really irked me."

The reason Chadbourne can flummox discographers with his myriad cassette releases is because he holds to the ethic of creative jazz and improvisation. Each night must be fresh, spontaneous, special. Whereas the rock format hems groups behind their monitors, blissfully ignorant of the sound actually reaching the crowd and often unable to react spontaneously to their audience because every move in their set is rehearsed, Chadbourne's intimate — through frequently noisy — approach is predicated on him hearing what we hear.

"People from the pop and rock field, even some of these bands I've collaborated with, they can't understand how I can conceive of making the records as quickly as I can. But if you come from the jazz point of view, a good jazz or improvising group might go on the road and every night you could record it and every night you could possibly have something that's worth releasing."

Mama's boys

Chadbourne credits his work ethic to his mother, a surprising comment until you remember rock 'n' roll was launched by a singer and guitarist devoted to his mama (and relaunched by another mama's boy, this time with spiky hair). Mother's boy Eugene says, "My mother was German and very practical. One thing I learned from her was that it's not that difficult to sustain yourself in this society, to work and earn money. She taught me the work ethic, which I think is really important. People can achieve things by working hard, there's no point in just sitting around whining about how you should have this and that handed to you. There's a lot of that in the music business. Wherever you are, there's somebody you knew back when you were both with dirty underwear, and now this guy is a genius star and he should be handing you the world because he's an old friend. There's a lot of time wasted on this envy — stupid thinking. There's a lot you can achieve by controlling everything and not getting sucked into the ways the commodity system preys on creative people — like 'You need the latest equipment to impress people.'"

Rust never sleeps

If this interview has concentrated on Chadbourne's modus operandi rather than his musical technique, that's because his guitar (Leon McAuliffe meets Fred "Sonic" Smith meets Derek Bailey) and banjo (techno-bluegrass meets clawhammer) are best experienced on one of his innumerable LPs, CDs or cassettes. In person, Chadbourne is affable and amusing, but not to the point of hiding what he actually thinks. He has moments of sternness characteristic of bandleaders — people who know how to be decisive. Endowed with a terrific talent the can enter a room anywhere in the world and make people pay attention to his playing, laugh and applaud, he's resolved to keep rubbing it up against people who appreciate it best, who can talk back to him. His way is not Devo or the KLF taking on the hypocrisies of the mass media in their own brash, soulless, alienated language. His method is to let his extraordinary productions leak out into the world, leaving them to infiltrate a different way of doing things. Unlike the strident statements rap and rock groups aim at the charts, Chadbourne's productive largesse — the tide of small-label releases, his own self-bootlegging cassette guerrilla warfare, his openness to collaboration and sheer accident — suggests that maximizing profits is not the only strategy. The iron law of commerce as an end in itself starts to show specks of rust.

As the structures of capitalism tilt towards recession and bankruptcy — including a dinosaur music industry geared towards the manufacture of celebrity faces and anonymous beats — Chadbourne's DIY ethic looks more and more realistic. Politics or no politics, Eugene Chadbourne's avant garde bohemian is proof that the emancipation of the working musician will always need to be enacted by the musicians themselves. *Insect Attractor* is out now on Leo Records.

Seven Chadbourne Pearls



Eugene Chadbourne Volume Two Solo Acoustic Guitar

(Parachute CD1976)

A bearded Eugene plays solo guitar. "Chadbourne," runs a note, "uses cheap, battered Harmony guitars from pawnshops exclusively, but stay tuned for further developments." In the midst of this improvising purism, he manages to do a version of "Rocket" by jazz alto saxophonist Oliver Lake.

Eugene Chadbourne & Jimmy Carl Black Pachucu Cadaver

(Fire Ant CD 1995)

Chadbourne interprets the Beefheart songbook in partnership with Jimmy Carl Black, drummer for The Mothers Of Invention. Scratches freeform versions impart an intense hillbilly lyrism. "The Dust Blows Forward And The Dust Blows Back" is a masterpiece. For their wonderful rendering of "The Blimp" (a notorious studio 'event' from Trout Mask Replica), however, look for the duo's *Locked In A Dutch Coffeeshop* (Fundamental Recording Company CD, undated).

Eugene Chadbourne The Acquaduct (Rectangle LP 1997)

Notable for the sterling Country tracks Chadbourne cut with Nashville session musicians, but even their pedigree couldn't get him an underground release. Also, covers of Ornette Coleman's "Peace Warriors", Herbie Nichols's "The Gig" and John Coltrane's "Way Too Blue".

Eugene Chadbourne & Derek Bailey Toot For Teal (Rectangle 10" LP 1997)

An encounter with free improvisation's most exacting ideologists. Did Bailey make Chadbourne play legit? Chadbourne: "Derek was making sure I was going to do some songs, right from the beginning he was saying, 'Are you going to sing?' He wanted me to do it so he could have a fun time fucking around with it!"

Eugene Chadbourne Various Artists Boogie With The Hook (Leo CD 1995)

Duets with Bailey, Amsterdam drummer Han Bennink, jazz bandleader Charles Tyler, banjo supremo Volmar Verkerk and a 1980 duet with John Zorn. Sound quality is lo-fi to hi-fi and everything in between, the programming delightful.

Eugene Chadbourne Insect Attractor Insect & Western Compositions For Ensemble (Leo CD 1998)

DAT technology enables improvising guerrillas to sound as good as corporate mercenaries. However, this release marks Chadbourne's emergence as a composer as well as instrumentalist. Check the flute solo from ex-Mother Of Invention Bunk Gardner, classically trained Carrie Shull's beautiful oboe, Alex Ward's keening soprano and a host of others.

Eugene Chadbourne The Hellingtones (Intakt CD 1998)

Chadbourne's cut-ups of Duke Ellington charts interpreted by a group including the aforementioned Shull and Ward, bassoonist Leslie Ross, keyboardist Jangist Pat Thomas and Improv legend Paul Lovers on drums. Intakt insist on squeaky clean production, letting hi-fi squares appreciate some superb musicianship ...



Amid the Anglo-Asian cultural flirtations of the 1960s, an Indian violinist and a black British free jazz player carried out the world's first successful Indo-Jazz fusion. Violinist **John Mayer** recalls some historic encounters. Words: Rob Young. Photography: Maria Ramstrom

Lipping the scales

"I was brought up in a very poor family, and quite frankly I used music to get out of the slums. I don't have any high falutin' ideas. All this business of inspiration, and all that." John Mayer makes a springing gesture. "When I'm hungry, I play. It's as simple as that. I was what they call a gunfighter — have fiddle, will travel."

At many times during a long career, John Mayer has had to come up with creative solutions to crises and conflicts endemic to an artist exploring virgin territory. Born in 1930 in Calcutta, he came of age in that fertile, turbulent post-war period when Asian and Western musics first seriously clashed, then intermixed and finally found harmony. Under the influence of The Beatles and Ravi Shankar, Anglo-Indian cultural exchange came over to swinging London in the mid-60s. Mayer, who had already been resident in Britain for 15 years, was running his Indian chamber group when he found himself in a studio with the visionary British jazz quintet led by saxophonist Joe Harriott. What eventually emerged from their encounter was the first significant fruit of the faltering exchanges going on between England and India since the war. The music not only crossed cultural barriers; it also achieved a genuine fusion of jazz and Indian classical music, of raga and hard bop. The significance of the groundbreaking Indo-Jazz Fusions records Mayer and Harriott recorded in 1967-68 hasn't diminished in the intervening years. Indeed, now that they're finally being resussed, coinciding with a new era of Asian-led multicultural cross-pollinations, it's finally possible to take a true measure of their impact.

Born the son of a Calcutta dockworker, Mayer was destined to grow up a nobody. His family was poor, and he got his first violin from his aunt who had caged it off the English colonial family she cleaned for. His first, enthusiastic sawings were noticed by his father, who called him a "cissy" for indulging such an unmanly pastime. Luckily, his mother managed to persuade the French violinist Philippe Sandre to give her son secret violin lessons during his lunch breaks. "He taught me until I was 13 or 14, until I could play Mendelssohn's *Rondo Capriccioso*," recalls Mayer, perched on the piano

stool in his North London home. "Then he announced to the school, 'This is Johnny Mayer — I've been teaching him for free!' Then they accepted me." A prodigy, Mayer already wanted to become a composer by the time he entered Bombay's most prestigious music competition, encouraged by another Indian violinist, Mehta Mehta (father of the conductor Zubin). He said, "Look, John, you'll never get out of this country with composition — they won't accept you. You are a damn fine fiddle player use your violin and get out! Once you are in England, put your violin down and say, 'I'm a composer'." The day I went to do this concert, I had been sleeping on a roof the night before, and there was a tear in my shirt, and no buttons on it. But I played the Brahms fiddle concerto and I won it!" His prize was a paid trip to London, and a violin course at the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied under the exiled Hungarian composer Matyas Seiber. But Mayer's funding ran out a year after he arrived. Putting his composer ambitions on hold, he took up a series of orchestral posts, first with The London Philharmonic and then The Royal Philharmonic. In the time between his arrival in Britain in 1952 and the day he quit the orchestra in 1965, Mayer got to absorb all he needed to know about Western classical traditions.



The fateful Harriott-Mayer meeting came at the end of a long sequence of events which, with hindsight, looked like stepping stones leading straight to it. In the mid-60s, Mayer had managed to get one of his compositions — the brief *Raga Musi* for solo clarinet — recorded and used as a TV education theme tune. In the process he was introduced to the powerful EMI producer Denis Preston. In the hope Preston would be able to broker more work for him in the 'East meets West' style he was dabbling with, Mayer pestered Preston's office for months, but with no response. He was on the verge of abandoning his attempt at becoming a jobbing composer when a letter arrived: "Dear Mr Mayer, Mr Preston would like to see you in his office..." Mayer recalls, "I went to see him, and he said, 'We're doing this prestige record for the Shakespeare centenary, and we're short of two and a half minutes of music. Most of our composers are busy now. Do you have a piece of music we could use?' I said, 'Of

course I have." He said, "It's for three flutes, trombone, two trumpets and percussion. Bring it in tomorrow — we're recording at 6:30! I sat up all night and wrote a piece called *Arie For Bacon*." Arriving the next day at the studio, Mayer met the session musicians: "There was Don Lusher, Kenny Baker, all these big jazz players." Preston vanished with the tapes to America for a couple of months, but on his return he brought good news: "[Atlantic Records president] Ahmet Ertegun liked your piece," Mayer recalls. Preston saying, "Also, they had this idea of bringing a fusion of the Indian and the Western together."

Preston had it all planned out: he would pair Mayer's Indian quartet with Hammett's group, plus a flautist standing amicably. Hammett was already a vanguard figure in British jazz, and his pioneering albums such as *Free Form*, *Movement* and *Abstract* are held to be lost tablets of free music, carved in spooky tandem at the beginning of the 1960s with the better documented advances of Ornette Coleman. For Hammett, it would be simultaneously a progression and an abandonment of the giant steps he'd been taking towards freedom. The way Mayer tells it, Hammett was aware of the importance of getting his head around Eastern methods, but the sessions that were eventually released as *Indo-Jazz Suite* were hard tol.

"We had two days in the studio," Mayer says. "We started at ten in the morning and at half past, Joe said, 'What the hell is going on? I can't play with all this bloody noise!' I said, 'Look, Joe, this is an instrument you have never known — a star!' I gave him a lecture: 'The sitar has seven main strings, and 13 sympathetic strings, which are tuned to the notes of the raga.' Things became easier after that first session: trumpeter Shake Keane was replaced by Kenny Wheeler, and Jackie Dougan took over the drum stool from Alan Ganley. But Mayer seemed to be in the driving seat. "I had the best," he says, "he was a tremendous player, Joe. He was quick to get these things. His technique was superb; he was far ahead of his time. Kenny Wheeler was a wonderful player — so beautiful! And [pianist] Pat Smythe used to grasp the raga immediately." The next two albums released by the Double Quartet had — in name at any rate — moved on from the classical statelyness of the Suite, and suggested that more of a heat-exchange had taken place: they were titled *Indo-Jazz Fusions I* and *II*.

At what stage did the word "fusion" sneak into musical currency? Certainly, *Indo-Jazz Fusions I* and *II* were among the first records to appropriate a word that, by the following decade, had become a generic tag. "The Grove Dictionary of Jazz claims that fusion was coined by Denis Preston," comments Mayer, "but the man who coined the word was Don Norman, our road manager." Whatever. *Suite*, and then the two *Fusions* records, were heavily discussed antefixos on the jazz scene, according to Mayer: the first sold better in the first weeks of its release than Raw Shankar's 1965 *Portrait Of Genius*, the jazz-influenced album he made with flautist Paul Horn. Mayer seems pleased by his music's favourable performance compared to Shankar's sales. A Roman Catholic, he jokes: "Sheer luck. Maybe the 'Our Father' is stronger than the mantra!"

Talk of fusing East and West was already in the air back in India itself at the time Mayer was growing up. He played drums in a jazz group for a short time, and his first music teacher, Sanathan Mukherjee, promoted the communion of Eastern and Western sounds. "He said, 'If you ever want to make a fusion of these two techniques — which I know you want to do one day — your knowledge of Western music must be the same as your knowledge of Indian music, or even more.' Even as a little boy, I knew that Indian music is a scalar music, a linear technique. And I'd heard Schoenberg, and I knew that twelve tone was a scalar technique as well. At that young age, 13 or 14, I thought, there must be a way of putting these two things together. The only difference is, one is tonal, the other is atonal. But the ascending and descending structure of the Indian raga, the arohana and the avrohana, is similar in a way to the strictness of serial technique, where you cannot repeat a note."

Mayer injected a classical rigour into the process of integration. The most haunting track on *Fusions II* is the heavily apostrophised "Song Before 'Sunrise'". Mayer's explication of those inverted commas gives an insight into how deep the fusion bit into the track. He needs a few moments to recall its origins, reaches for the original manuscript off his shelves, then plays a few bars on his piano: "The sunrise in India is something wonderful," he rhapsodises, "and I used a raga lalid which is a morning sunrise raga. It has no dominant. And the dominant, in any scale, always gives a feeling of future. But because this has no dominant, there is a feeling of uncertainty. So therefore the 'song' before 'sunrise' is neither night, nor is it day. So you're singing about something when you don't know what's going to happen [in a philosopher, the sun might not rise, you know? Which means, you are dead, you won't be here to see it.]"

The Indo-Jazz Fusions group was successful — they toured the UK and larger international festivals, and ended up with a series of TV specials, where they played with invited guests, including The Nice and The Moody Blues. But their first incarnation came to an end with Hammett's untimely death from cancer in 1973; the saxophonist had also suffered from recurring tuberculosis. "He used to smoke and drink like hell," says Mayer. "He'd say, 'Come on Johnny, let's go and get the taste.' They say he overdoed — well, what made him do it? You drink to forget, don't you? I couldn't understand why other people were working, and this poor guy wasn't getting the work that was due to him in the jazz field. He was a great player. Sitting in his flat by himself, he must have got up [every] morning, looked at the sheet, and nothing to do."

For a long while after, Mayer fell back on composition — he is now composer in residence at the Birmingham Conservatoire, and has sat on the Arts Council. An abortive attempt to revive the Indo-Jazz project with new personnel, including saxophonist Steve Williamson, didn't last — because, Mayer believes, Williamson felt too much in the shadow of Hammett's genius. In the last few years, however, a third format has taken shape, again comprising ten players, among them the composer's son Jonathan on sitar. This new incarnation has played concert halls in India and Bangladesh, as well as releasing two CDs for the Nimbus label. Although Nimbus's unorthodox recording methods, designed for orchestral expansiveness, are utterly unsuited to capturing the intimacy of the ensemble,

Asian Arts and the new Ragaatal pick up on the original group's seafarers freshness. "I find the younger players know more," explains Mayer of his new team. "The world has progressed in 35 years. Take my son Jonathan: apart from being a star player, he's a damn fine composer. And he doesn't only know Indian music, he knows Western music. I have all forms of musical apartheid: the young people's knowledge is of a higher plane. Indian classical musicians? It's all, 'Can't spoil my gharana [school], can't tam my culture, and all that rubbish. You can't say these things.'

Mayer's orchestral, chamber and instrumental compositions — *Shivontara*, *The Flames Of Lanka*, *Probhanda* — incorporate Hindu mythology within a European classical framework. Inevitably, they don't sound as exotic now as Ravi Shankar's *Concerto For Sitar And Orchestra* must have done in the late 60s. But when you meet Mayer, you become aware that today's open ground wasn't won without a fight. "If you are challenging a man to a duel, make sure you know what arms he's using, because if you take a sword and he has a gun, he'll blow your head off!" he says, laughing at the memory of his determination to outpace the musical exports from both East and West. The long years since the Hammett era have tempered him — a little. "Philosophy for me is a very important subject. It makes people less belligerent. The great philosopher never uses the word 'I', it's always 'one'. The whole world is part of 'I' — if you look at microbes through a microscope they look completely distorted. But there's order in there. I just quantified it."

Indo-Jazz Fusions I & II is ressed on Verve. *Ragaatal* is released this month on Nimbus.



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- King Tubby & Friends Dub Gone Crazy (Blood & Fire)
- Various Easy Tempo Volume 2: The Psycho Beat (Easy Tempo)
- Heitor Villa-Lobos Bachianas Brasilienses No 5 (EMI)
- Duke Ellington The Queen's Suite (Pablo)
- Orchestra Baobab Prince's Choice (World Circuit)

Compiled by DJ Leyli, Inoteca Bar, Athens, Greece

Moondog

sound check

On form: November's selected albums and 12"s

Air Traffic Controllers

Assistant To The Assistant
PARALLEL SHAPED CO.

Best known as the co-president of Matador Records, Gerard Cosloy is pretty defensive about his Improv project with drummer Clare Pannell. Air Traffic Controllers' eponymous album and track sides seem like protective layers of irony, while their Website is so dense you can barely tell what's a joke and what isn't.

He shouldn't worry: he's a terrific guitarist, an adept of effects devices whose specialty is grabbing his best phrases as they're looping them and using them as the base for his next wave of noise. You can hear his love of underground rock expressed directly in his free playing. There are suggestions of The Dead C in his treacherous tone, Protoplasmic and Tom Cora in his loop and solo figure-ground process, and maybe even Martin Swope's tape loops for *Mission Of Burma* in the way he'll punctuate a phrase off rhythm and let it build up tension as it cycles.

Pannell, meanwhile, is way over on the other end of the skill spectrum — she's got the kind of natural response that will be ruined if she ever learns to play time. Fortunately, it sounds like she has no interest in timekeeping. Her regular battery is an ideal complement to Cosloy's precise cycles and raw stashes. Most of the time she's following his lead but for the first few minutes of "Recordata" she steps out an imperfectly repeating carrier over an instant tritone of electronics and he comes in with a long, caustic scream.

The four long tracks on this third album mostly take a while to build up momentum, but when Cosloy and Pannell get it right, as on "External," they're terrifyingly intense.

Douglas Wolk

Geri Allen

The Gathering
VERVE 557614 CD

Finally Geri Allen made her name playing with drummer Paul Motian and bassist Charlie Haden. The two 60s avant-garde veterans accompanied her on absorbing meditations that reassembled the legacy of Bill Evans and Paul Bley. She played Chinese Coleman's "Lonely Woman," demonstrating that the pond's tempered system need not deny a musical the delights of key-free harmonics. Since then, she has pursued a contrarian course between the bankable mainstream and outcast creativity, maintaining an idiosyncratic silent that keeps her music intriguing. The



Lord of the new church: Chris Carter reviewed page 64

pedigree for this new release is apt: dream photographs of Allen in a beautiful sequined dress; her expression is engaged and intelligent. Something challenging lurks within these beguiling sounds.

The producer is Leo Mazero, associate of Brithes Brew era Miles Davis' Percussionist Mino Cinelu is also on hand. Pono the prism has been abandoned. However, as with the first Weather Report album, haunting effects are achieved by innovative arrangements and unorthodox mic technique rather than by

plugging in the latest gizmo. This isn't just the sound of jazzies warming their skills in a pop studio. Fusion drum supremo Lenny White plays electrician rock drums, all boom and stammer. Allen listens to him sexually. Floating knife-edge decisions over his pummeling with noscious grace. Allen's horn chores are impressionistic meanders out of Gil Evans and Hermosa Pascual. "Ray" graves dangerously near the West Coast major chord saccharine that makes much smooth jazz resemble introductions to a Linda Ronstadt

An A-Z of reviews:

Air Traffic Controllers Geri Allen

Charles Amirkhanian Erik B &

Rakim Derek Bailey The Beach

Boys Tim Berne & Michael

Formanek Peter Bleuged Rob

Brown-Lou Grassi Quartet Chris

Burn's Ensemble **Chris Carter**

Cobra Killer **Coloursound** Ray

Coltrane **Combustible Edison** CTI

Miles Davis Dominic Duval with

The CT String Quartet **EAR**

Exhaust Michael Finnissy Michael

Formanek **Global Electronic**

Network Peter Hammill **HEAD**

Teiji Ito **Lech Jankowski** Peter

Jeffenes **Leroy Jenkins** Peter

Khan & Walker **Chris Knox**

Robert M Lepage & Martin

Tetreault René Lussier & Martin

Tétreat **William Parker** Ivo

Perelman with The CT String

Quartet **Plastikman** Project Dark

Eliane Radigue **Sam Rivers &**

Tony Hymas **Steve Roden** Ryuichi

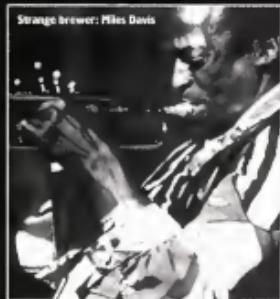
Sakamoto **Sonic Subjekts** Third

Eye Foundation **Urban Tribe** Dr

Walker & McFlux **Chris Watson**

Hal Willner **Witchman Vs**

Jammin' Unit plus round ups of the latest compilations, avant rock, classical, critical beats, electronica, global jazz and outer limits releases

**Miles Davis****The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions**

COLUMBIA LEGACY AC40055/570 4CD

So what have we here? A new, enhanced version of the fusion-spawning classic, or another cynical marketing ploy? The answer is, a little of each. The site, first of all, is something of a monstrosity. We are not given the complete sessions from 19-21 August 1969 which produced the six canonic pieces from the original double LP — after all, these were spliced together by Miles Davis and producer Teo Macero from various studio jams and fragmented takes. A ‘complete’ issue would include the material in its pre-edited condition, as well as all of the unused portions. But honestly, would we want to hear all of these bits and pieces? Would it be insightful to see where the scraps of paper in a Schwinn’s collage originally came from, or is the truly important part what he ultimately did with them? That’s an argument for scholars and fanatics.

So what we are given on the first one and a half discs of the four disc compilation are the as-yet-never-reissued compositions of ‘Pherachis’s Dance’, ‘Bitches Brew’, ‘Spanish Key’, ‘John McLaughlin’, ‘Miles Runs The Voodoo Down’ and ‘Sanctuary’ — “digitally remixed and remastered” from their previous CD release. No miracles with the new sound, but it is cleaned and beatified up to a noticeable degree, the better to hear the crucial interplay of interior voices in

the electrified ensemble’s lux and fury. Benny Maupin’s brooding bass clarinet has new bite; Jack DeJohnette’s cymbals sizzle; the small percussion instruments now have an identity; there’s better distinction between the filigree of Joe Zawinul’s and Chick Corea’s keyboards, and bassists Dave Holland and Harvey Brooks emerge from what was once a primordial sludge into the light of day. And as a result, no matter how many times you’ve heard it, the music blossoms once again and re-establishes its revolutionary position. Critics have claimed that Davis began to shapeshift on *Filles De Kilimanjaro* and *In A Silent Way*, turning from jazz master into a psychedelic chameleon seduced by acid rock, funk (Sky Stone and James Brown), and the contemporary classical otherworld timbres of Penderecki and Ligeti. True enough, but these tentative first steps sound like a gentle garden party compared to these six volcanic eruptions. Call it whatever you like, a churning cauldron of voodoo stew, post-Soviethausen electro funk, an apocalyptic farce for the Death of Jazz. The truth is that Davis and company were alchemists during those three days in the studio, using spontaneous musical mass hypnosis and post-production tape-slicing wizardry to create gold.

The remaining stuff in the box is neither golden nor *Bitches Brew*, exactly. The subsequent sessions from November 1969, January and February 1970 altered the personnel significantly and the bottom dropped out. Gone are the polyphonic madness and mystical mood, star notwithstanding. Some of this music — the misleading ‘Great Expectations’ and ‘Guinevere’, visits to soft rock snowmelt — appeared only years later, and for good reason. The problem with long, jamming-in-the-studio takes is that when inspiration flags, the music — without the benefits of *Bitches Brew* style editing and reconstruction — is simply tedious (the exception is ‘Lonely Fire’, which is mesmerising because of the boldness and vulnerability of its stark, exposed, raw nerve simplicity). The vaunted nine new pieces are fragments and studio jams that were wisely squelched in the first place.

During these exploratory dates, Davis seems to be hung up on atmosphere instead of rhythmic urgency (without Billy Cobham’s incisive fusion drumming, the music wouldn’t have a spine). The areas of freedom which the musicians were allowed are audible in sections of ‘Little Blue Frog’ and Zawinul’s ‘Silent Way’.

but the pauses and dead spots that drift in and out of the luxurious harmonies reveal that the magic is missing. Occasional grooves quickly dissolve, as if a sketch for a larger design which Davis had yet to visualise. (After a pretty but undeveloped two minute fragment, the wily tited ‘Take It Or Leave It’, Davis is heard to say, “I want to use that somewhere, Ted.”) The haphazardness — and ultimate pessimism, disdaining those elements of free jazz which gave *Bitches Brew* its edge — of Davis’s studio constructivist attitude is everywhere apparent. Even those brief moments of exultation — a taste of John McLaughlin’s Heavy Metal guitar (otherwise reined in — what happened to Davis’s supposed Hendrix influence?) in ‘Double Image’, or the sandpaper friction of traded solos in the otherwise static ‘Fed’ — simply stop, cutus interruptus in favour of artificial insemination, energy on the loose with no direction home.

Why include these hit-and-miss moments which have no real connection to the *Bitches Brew* sessions? Or, for that matter, why stop here? Drawing a line in mid-February 1970 is an arbitrary production decision to say the least. Why not pump up the packaging even more with the rest of Davis’s studio sessions from 1970 alone: ‘Durian’, ‘Kondi’ and ‘Willie Nelson’ (issued on the LP Directions); ‘Go Ahead John’ (from *Big Fun*), ‘Hiroshima’ (from *Get Up With It*) and the acclaimed ‘Joët Johnson’? Why not try and finally make some real sense out of this period — material which has been miserably doled out in the previous cut and paste LP collections? Are there more unreleased outtakes and fragments from these sessions? Let’s have them! If marketing motivates repackaging (as opposed to thoughtful collections which comment upon and enhance our understanding of the music and its context) is going to err, why not let it err on the side of defiance and inclusion, and the devil take the rest? Four CDs or six — what’s the difference? We’ve paid before, we’ll pay again.

The truth is, Columbia hasn’t known what to do with this morass of material since day one, and still hasn’t found the best setting for its release. *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* succeeds only by half — the first half, *Bitches Brew* itself. You’ve heard it, it’s brilliant. As for what came after, we still don’t have the big picture. If I were Oliver Stone, I’d smell a conspiracy.

ART LANGE

PHOTO: VAL WILMER

song Vernon Reid’s guitar part — Latino acoustic, close-miked and hard-picked — is a cliché, but it’s played with enough risk and bitterness to convince.

The Gathering is altogether an oddity: it rearranges commercial-sounding blendings with speculative intelligence. The only record sounding remotely like it is Frank Zappa’s *Sheik Yerself*, which placed arena rock guitar heroics alongside cocktail lounge double bass. Things are less harmonically innovative here, but just as it

threatens to degenerate into Jazz FM fodder, Reid modulates the harmony or comes up with a fascinating aural train on “On Gabriel’s Royal Blue Road”, trombonist Robin Eubanks solos over a Davis-like rock beat with heartstopping confessional intimacy. “Angels” uses ethereal harmonies that recall Soft Machine, seven year old Laika’s wordless scat evokes the nursery surrealism of Robert Wyatt’s singing, and Buster Williams’s bowed bass takes up her wobbly intonation to create a highly charged atmosphere. “Light Maner”

has authentic jazz moments as piano, bass and drums pursue parallel lines, falling in and nestling each other, creating a mix of teetering intelligence and sonorous power rarely achieved in other genres. “Joy And Wonder” points the way to a true assessment of Miles Davis’s electric music: the vital ingredient was not amplification, but hanging out-of-tempo harmonies over a shuffle. Alvin’s chamber fusion draws together unlikely strands in jazz and renews our idea of its history.

SEAN WATSON

Charles AmirkhanianWALLING TUNE
STRELLAND ST206 CD

Think of a cross between Pierre Henry, Lewis Carroll and the World Service and you have some idea of the electroacoustic work of American-based composer Charles Amirkhanian. It’s highly difficult to place his art — classical composition? David Shea-like sempitelia? Surrealist dreamscape? La Monte Anderson’s kaleidoscope? — describes him simply

as an anthropologist. *Gold And Sport*, for instance, is a weird take on the Olympic which overlays Americanian's voice to form crowd chants using artist names – "Go Van Gogh!" – accompanied by the sounds of an undulated but sporty, neither purely montages, nor sound sculptures: most of these pieces have a referential aspect. The 49-second *Chu Lu Lu* exemplifies cultural unification between France and America by overlaying music from Cajun and Native America and former French colonies.

Ideational associations often lead to bizarre sonic assemblies. *Vers Les Anges* tribute to Nicolas Slonimsky, who conducted the first performance of Varèse's *Ionisation*, starts with suns as a reference point, and a German music box dinging back to Slonimsky's youth. Later there's a dialogue between a cuckoo clock, a Korean strangled kumongo and a sampled cat. The pieces play havoc with categories, mixing the representational and the musical: a sound played on an instrument blends imperceptibly into a sampled environment, while animal sounds turn out to be mechanically produced.

It sounds like an aesthetics of rupture but somehow Americanian manages to warp his materials in such a way that they bend into impossible artificial spaces, warping between the graceful and the breakish. At one point in *Walking Tuna*, an extended homage to Percy Grainger, he juggles the Donald Duck vocalisations of Elizabeth Bailey, sampled bird sounds and what sounds like squeaked rubber toys (ducks?) all of which get slowed down or speeded up. Playful, complex and enigmatic, this is music that reminds you there are still novel ways to break with convention.

MATT FIFTYFIVE

Derek Bailey

Playbacks
BNGD BNG004 CD

With the release of Gutpi's *Drums & Bass* two years ago, Derek Bailey upset the basic protocols of free improvisation. Having at last invented it, Bailey seemed to be straining the dichotomies on which free music rested: the assertion of freedom against determinism and its corollary, the priority of the live event over the recorded product. But Bailey's first foray into the land of programmed beats equally transgressed the conventions of drum'n'bass which might permit jazzy life but hardly the sort of sustained and relentless improvisation that is Bailey's trade.

But to anyone who has kept track of his career or paid heed to his own accounts of it, Bailey's defiance of genre was perfectly in character. For four decades, the now 68 year old guitarist has pursued free improvisation as an ethical project, a practice of perpetual self-transformation through a profound openness to the Other. He has continually sought out new players and contexts for the practice over the years amassing an astonishing

number and variety of discs for his one-on-one engagements.

Inspired by Gutpi's *Drums & Bass*, UK beatbox and Bingo label boss Sasha Frane-Jones decided to play Bailey's mismatcher by calling on friends and associates to produce pre-recorded beats for the guitarist to play with. In the end, 11 submissions from three-quarters were sent to Bailey, who tried his responses in a large day.

As in any genuine improvisational setting, the risks were great. The two parties might fail to engage, instead reverting to their respective modes regardless of the other's provocation. The rhythm tracks might become mere backdrop, enforcing conventional musical hierarchies.

But, of course, the greater the risk the greater the reward, and on this wonderful record the rewards are indeed great. Uncertainty, it comes off as a genuine set of dues, each partner seemingly negotiating with the other. No doubt this is a testimony to Bailey's extraordinary ability to turn any musical situation into a dialogue, asserting himself or withdrawing at the appropriate moments. But a good deal of credit must go to Bailey's interlocutors, who almost without exception sent him tracks that nicely anticipated his moves.

On Darryl Moore's "O For O" and Frane-Jones's "Sash!" it's often difficult to tell who's doing what, as Bailey's volume pedal modulates percussive scraping plucks and thumps to compound his partner's spacious dubby arias. But nothing here matches the frenetically noisy interchange between Bailey and Chicago chum 'n' bass DJ Casey Rose on "Resigned (Electric)". With phenomenal control, Bailey transforms sprays of feedback into quasi-vocal articulations that nearly outstrip the already absurd speed of Rose's rapidfire breaks. Henry Kaiser offers a quarter take on chum 'n' bass, serving up wonderfully off-kilter rhythms and squeches that Bailey accentuates with dampened harmonics.

More spare and elegant is the delicate dance Bailey performs with Burmese percussionist Ko Then Hui. If the duo with Rose foregrounds the electrical charge of the amplified guitar, this duet highlights the instrument's elemental materials, wood and metal. In a similar vein, Bailey gets very neatly funky playing counterpoint to ex-Beefheart drummer John French's methodical trap drum runs.

But the illusion that these are live duo performances is shattered by John Clewett, who gives Bailey's recorded legacy the plunderphonic treatment, causing the 'live' Bailey to sit this one out. At once predictable and appropriate, Clewett skilfully samples and repeats Bailey's characteristic gestures and vocabulary to parodic effect. But Bailey gets the last laugh. On the final track he leaves the playing to Jim O'Rourke and Loren

Mazzacane Connors and delivers a very and hilarious meditation on his love of the electric guitar and his fondness for the name George CHRISTOPHER COX

John Baumer, Pauline Sather, Jon Spencer

the jon spencer blues explosion

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Third Eye Foundation

You Guys Kill Me

DOMINO 16553 CD/LP

Bristol's co-operative of inspired anti-musicians has been responsible for some of the most primitive and aggressive music to come out of Britain. Flying Saucer Attack's *In Search Of Spices*, on Corpus Hermeticum, still stands as one of the most over-the-top, extended investigations into feedback hell in recent memory.

Yet for some inexplicable reason, the likes of FSA, Howitzer and Third Eye Foundation are held up as a paradigm for slack, indulgent rock. If anything the scene resuscitated punk's DIY aesthetic, disseminating, via its now-defunct Planet imprint, an ecstatic music that pulls on the increasingly diverse strands of the international underground. It's the antithesis of the current UK rock apathy. It might also have been conceived as a reaction against the other Bristol of lazy beats and faccidi, speechless Trip-Hop.

Third Eye Foundation have been quietly practising their own brand of cracked resilience since 1996. Semitic, their first LP, was all faltering semi-anarcho rhythmic bombast and speedy loops. Last year's unfairly overlooked Ghost saw TEF's Matt Elliot going solo and stretching time even further. Combining the circular motions of 60s-era Can and the heavily damaged breakbeats and spectral studio sounds of Organum and Biota, Elliot styled a music that managed to well and truly alienate his project from any would-be contemporaries.

Starting with its Byzantine cover art featuring John the Baptist, and songs like "No Dove No Covenant" and "Lions Writing The Bible", You Guys Kill Me is steeped in the deep esoteric tradition of the English underground. Elliot's favoured working methods owe something to Nurse With Wound's hermetic studio practice of doing time in solitary, building tracks from scratch. The opening track, "A Galaxy Of Scars", features the same dark Latin shuffle that dominated Nurse With Wound's Rock 'N' Roll Station. A rattled bossa nova rhythm trundles on beneath heavy, unearthly strings and back-masked loops. It's a bizarre marriage that primes the album's predominantly off-kilter mood.

Indeed, Elliot's earlier interest in the vaguely 'danceable' rhythms of drum 'n' bass seems to be on the wane. Tracks

up the suppressed demons of tradition in the postmodern jukehouse.

Rob Brown composed six of the eight tunes. Having arrived in New York in the mid-80s, this amazing artist has been criminally under-represented (his More Records releases a striking duet with pianist Matthew Shipp in 1997). Brown springs from the Hodges-Parker-Dolphy lineage; his sound brimming with feeling. The idea of music as a realm detached, severed from the moves and grooves of the player's immediance, is thrashed in each bumptious note in tenorist Asaf Turner. Brown has found another player for whom sound is tremulous with meaning, who casts phrases in tempos derived from breath and muscle. The quartet use a bouncing Ornette-

ish beat, a cluttered stomp that resists definition as time signature yet has an utterly distinct character. Drummer Lou Grassi and bassist Chris Lightfoot toss the groove around so it becomes impossible to tell who contributes what: a collective vibe.

"A Herk" puts a stately blues bass under a head made of frozen licks voiced in unison by Brown and Turner. "Clean Sweep" is a tune with a push-pushing a lumbering velocity that grates the players. On "3 Rings", Brown and Turner moan Aylestone in a climate alive with voices; when everyone else lays out, Grassi's irregularly rolling toms are revealed in a continuous four-part drum dialogue: the key to the malleable activity of the ensemble peaks. The two saxophonists can lock into opposing

vectors within his best cascade, while finding space to be independent. In jazz freedom is not free, it's hard work, a product of being able to imagine several musical continuities simultaneously. Rob Brown's re-statement of the theme of "3 Rings" has an unrefined lyricalism that's truly touching.

Lightfoot's "Untozen" is a free jazz groover with roots in Ellington's exotic Tsalib withes up and down the tenor with an intensity that recalls both Coltrane and Peter Brötzmann. Lightfoot's bass solo is all mystery and twinkling lights. Grassi's drums crackling like a dying Brown's final alto statement — cracked metaphors, polyrhythmic fumes — is a reminder of the inextricable North African character of the music pioneered by Coltrane. Mayat called 'trellis'.

Scratching The Surface is brimstone from the Real School. Incomprehensible to a mainstream hung on racial stereotypes and imagined class, Rob Brown's outreach nose assertion may be confined to an enervated's backdrop, but it's nevertheless the very definition of jazz as cultural challenge.

BEN WATSON

Chris Burn's Ensemble

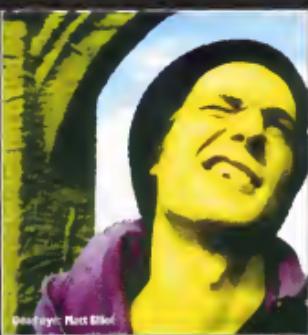
Navigations

ACD 12 CD

As Richard Barrett — one of the very few 'straight' composers with real understanding of improvisation — argues in his sleeve notes, this album is a nod to the idea that a large ensemble needs the discipline of a compositional structure to channel its energies in a fruitful direction. But — like Bucharest's conductors — there is a skeletal framework; for the pieces performed by Chris Burn's Ensemble. Burn identifies himself in the title *Navigations*:

Like conduction, his *navigations* are a way of getting more freedom than usual in an arrangement, without abandoning structure. Improvisers shouldn't be defensive about the pre-planning involved. This music "does the things which only improvised music can do" as Barrett writes — provided you understand improvised as making reference to some kind of pre-performance preparation. Spontaneous creation is a feeling, but strictly an illusion.

The features of *Navigations* are often quiet and slow moving, with occasional eruptions. Phil Durrant's "Sowan For Ensemble" has a continuous, low dynamic level throughout, contrasting very high and very low sounds. The gestures of Axel Denner's "Orfeo" are more instrumental and intermittent. Matthew Hushinson's electronics and synthesizer are an important factor in the album but like other powerfully solo voices, these moody merge seamlessly into the ensemble. In fact, there's a remarkable summing-up of solo identities. The performances avoid the arch structure common in free improvisation, the process of surges and decline. Textures and timbres gradually draw the listener in.



Matt Elliot

Rob Brown-Lou Grassi Quartet

Scratching The Surface

OMP 161 CD

In his sleeve notes, veteran crusader for creative music Rob Rusch claims to hear in Rob Brown's playing "clear echoes of Charlie Mingus and Lee Konitz, along with a touch of Stan Getz, even King Curtis and, of course, Charlie Parker". Well, in jazz as elsewhere, everything is connected to everything else, but Sostrene We Surfin' isn't the coolest these names imply. Quite the opposite. It's as if America has come up with a reply to Herbie/Harrison/Felz: some free jazz that vibrates with vocalised intensity, summoning



Eric B And Rakim

Paid In Full: The Platinum Edition
ISLAND 524873 24CD

It's debatable whether Eric Barner and William Griffin Jr ever did get paid in full for this pioneering record — after all, it's hard to put a value on perfection. Recorded in 1986 and released in 1987, *Paid In Full* is one of the foundation stones of modern HipHop, an album which sounded impossibly sleek and moody when it appeared and which, over a decade later, sounds spookily contemporary, despite the thousands of records which have since mimed it for inspiration and samples. And though it was the contemporary collage of Public Enemy — with their resonant information overload and flickerframe samples — that attracted the plaudits of the liberal intelligentsia, the music of Eric B and Rakim was the absolute apogee of B-boy culture and skills. It was all about precision, pose and flow.

Recorded at a time when The Beastie Boys and Run DMC were taking HipHop underground by leavening its steely punch with user-friendly Metal

guitars and theatrical vocals, *Paid In Full* stayed unswervingly true to the militant sparseness of Schooly D's "Saturday Night" and KRS1 and Scott La Rock's "Criminal Minded", but somehow managed to bring into being a complex emotionality far removed from either the luncheaded bratty of the former or the chilly gangsterism of the latter. What made *Paid In Full* a quantum leap beyond the efforts of their contemporaries was the way that they created HipHop's first entirely coherent soundscape. All the various 90s instrumental beats scenes— DJ Shadow, Massive Attack, the whole TripHop schtick — are rooted in it.

Shortly after they met in 1985, the duo made their first recording, "Eric B Is President", for the independent Harlem label Zalla. A massive underground HipHop hit, it also provided a crucial missing link between the nascent HipHop nation, 70s funk (James Brown sample), European Electro and dub reggae. Eric B's measured, intuitive touch shunned HipHop production onto a new plateau of sophistication. He clearly knew his dub, and had fully absorbed the possibilities generated by reverb and the mixing board. As an MC, Rakim eschewed the gonzooid bragging of his contemporaries in favour of a understated but lyrical and intricate flow of acute observations. By the time he and Eric B came to record the *Paid In Full* album, each was a master of his chosen art.

The album spawned HipHop's finest classics in "I Know You Got Soul" and "Paid In Full". Aside from its slurred James Brown horn sample, the former is distinguished by its unique dynamic, generated by simultaneously running two separate drum patterns, each in its own stereo channel. The latter is a masterpiece of concision, the baseline climbing and falling with easy fluidity as Rakim breathlessly delivers a tumbling, skipping chain of perfectly measured enjambments. Both were huge hits, an extraordinary achievement considering their decidedly avant garde

influence, as the "smoking jacket and matching fed' vogue began to pale. A few years on, Combustable Edison have reappeared with an album that does justice to Bryan Ferry's commendation, "My favourite surviving group". The compliment can be taken literally, as The Impossible World is permeated end-to-end with the "convulsive beauty" that Andre Breton searched for throughout his life.

Nowhere is the commitment to both masculinity and surrealism more evident than in the vocals of Miss Lily Banquet. Previously, her doo-wop intonation tamed the group with the brush of campiness, now a much improved instrument, her voice can toggle between numerous personae. One moment a Brechtian jazz vamp on "Pink Veil", the next she becomes a human theremin negotiating the melody of "Seduction". Through the album's dozen songs she reveals many sides — or

multiple personalities within — a single character, one that might parallel Breton's ultimate creation, the elusive Nada. An angelic Miss Lily bids, "Welcome to Utopia", then begs "Take me until die", no doubt immediately prior to disappearing out the boudoir window.

The Millionaire, the group's guitarist and conceptual maestro, has always been a tellemic mimic, able to summon the colours of Dick Dale, Les Paul and Sydneys Reinhardt on demand. Each of the nearly impossible orchestrations which characterize The Impossible World turns on his guile, which dovetails with Hammond B-3 organ, overamped Rhodes piano and string bass, as Combustable Edison become by turns a swing orchestra, a Weimar cabaret act, a Breton nightclubs' Junglist turntable jam and the house band in the Jesters' favorite restaurant. For all the pastaking studio craft, an overriding sense of fun and

confidence underlies these disparate strands, as with later period Kid Creole albums where juju rap and soca nestled comfortably in adjacent grooves.

The Combustables have found their footing in the studio, with the help of producer John Holcomb and the crucial participation of sonic maven Robin Reimbold aka Sceney. The latter's shadow extends deep into the album's structure. He updates the group's rhythms with Trance beats and subtle filter sweeps, spinning a lagerie of Cold War tension with his trademarked spray of soundbytes plucked from the cellphone ether. Much of The Impossible World can be read as the hybrid of the ultimate Equivex recording date and a shortwave numbers station: beneath the heaving and batone arrangements, scratchy voices holler indecipherable codes, a potent of uncertainty in Utopia.

RICHARD HENDERSON

construction methods. In "Paid In Full", a quixotic flute motif and the constant pedal-clone of vinyl crackle haunt the spaces between the crisp, fluttering beats. This revolutionary technique — deploying the barest suggestions of tonal colour to animate a whole tune — became Eric B's stock-in-trade, and on *Paid In Full*'s non-single cuts, he explored it with dead-eyed accuracy.

Throughout the album, the beats are systematically distressed by the panoply application of distortion and echo. bizarre metallic reverbs create the buzzing swoops and sporadic avalanches of pure dub that occasionally swamp Rakim's scaly, impulsive vocals. Meniscule samples — a sparsely plucked guitar pattern in "Hive The Crowd", a curious synthesized harpsichord in "As The Rhyme Goes On", eerie spaghetti Western chimes in "My Melody" — combine to generate a unified atmosphere. Each stomach-sound opens a portal in the mix, importing a haze of space and history, evoking the distant buzz of the city beyond the studio. Somehow, *Paid In Full* conjures up a misty melancholy mistakenly presumed alien to the culture that produced it. The record is drenched in the still, sad music of humanity.

Given the unique weight of this achievement, it's not surprising that Eric B took exception to a bunch of snooty Brits mucking about with his music. He hated the colourful parade of Colours' seven minute remix which propelled "Paid In Full" into the UK charts and opened millions of British ears to the possibilities of the sampler. Nevertheless, that mix occupies a pivotal place in UK dance culture, and this 'platinum edition' of *Paid In Full* includes it and a whole bunch of others on a second CD. Most of them are frankly lightweight, adding little to the flawless poise of the original versions. But none of these dilutions and desecrations has done any serious damage to the source. Now as then, *Paid In Full* is essential listening.

CHRIS SHARP

CTI

Point Seven
CONSPIRACY INTERNATIONAL (CD/CD+DV)

Chris Carter

Discoblast
CONSPIRACY INTERNATIONAL (CD/CD+DV)

If you ever needed proof that Industrial music was just psychadelic invention for the alienated lots of the punk age, Throbbing Gristle's manic manman Genesis P-Orridge was it. A fan of The Doors and Velvet Underground, he helped transmute psychadelic's sense of amnesia, dislocation into brutal urban Electronica. Noise was one weapon in TG's guerrilla armoury, but the post-Krautbahn computer world also descended, with dystopian synthesizers that would also be picked up by the likes of The Human League.

Orridge's one-time TG colleagues Chris Carter and Cosey Fanni Tutti brought other

influences to the group. Carter, in particular, expressed a liking for Abba, and although his current music hardly shows signs of a Swedish disco influence, it does share an interest in accessibility and a distrust of disruptive sonic elements. Chris and Casey have largely stuck to what they know: assertive blends of breathy synthpop and dark ambience which replace TÜ's rough edges with hi-tech polish. In their off-gaze, they produce dark Electronica for black-clad synthesiser fiends. This is the strand of psychadelia that embraces Techno-Hitmen and birthed the cosmic music of the 70s, as well as the considerably less interesting New Age synth music that followed. *Pont Seven* is disappointing, a palette of glib, wibby-washy atmospheres and dated rhythms congesting in a languid, listless drift. It would make great soundtrack music, but relies too heavily on formulaic novelty.

At times, however, the lack of interest in current trends pays dividends. The thunderous astute gallop of 'Lover', Carter's solo album *Dobbedown*'s ring-doubling rhythms into the ghost house swirl of 'Techno Torgmene Dream' if only such a thing could ever be done right. 'Solomo' engulfs the rotor blades of a military helicopter in a chemical ocean, while most of the album keeps a lifework of electronic pulsation free of too much gaudy ambience. If *Dobbedown* is ultimately every bit as gaudy as *Pont Seven*, at least it's a little less hamstrung by Styxian gloominess.

BRIAN DOUGIE

Dominic Duval with The CT String Quartet

The Navigator

CD £10.99/£12

Ivo Perelman with The CT String Quartet

The Alexander Suite

CD £10.99/£12

The opening innails of The CT String Quartet stand for Ceci Taylor. Ceci wrote some music for strings which he showed to Duval; his bassist, Duval put together a quartet to play it. That performance hasn't happened, but the quartet has found other useful employment.

The bring of *The Navigator* is a little misleading. It is an integral part of the quartet. His playing is prominent, but the other musicians are hardly heard. As a bassist, Duval gets in by breaking the standard string-quartet mould, dropping second violin, and the surprise of hearing those deeper tones frequently pushes him centre stage. Neither he nor his colleagues — Jason Hwang (cello), Ron Lawrence (viola) and Tomas Uriach (cello) — spend much time cleaving to the conventional roles or regularities of their instruments. Nonetheless, the music is securely rooted in the string quartet literature, and you can hear echoes of composers right through the tradition: from Cramm through Bartók to Schubert. Sometimes, as on 'Reverence', there are clear nods to Taylor

and elsewhere suggestions of Albeniz Ayler's string-heavy 'Change Has Come' group notably in the utilisation of the opening passages of 'Terra Plana'. *The Navigator* is a major achievement.

Unlike Duval, saxophonist Perelman is a guest soloist, but they know each other's moves. Duval has played in Perelman's group too. Perelman's tenor tends to dominate because it's a more penetrating instrument than the strings, but the quartet is not there to accompany the saxophone, at least not in the sense of providing a background, but to go along as valuable companions on a journey of discovery, dropping back when it chooses, while mostly engaging in equal commentary on the landscape and the conduct of the enterprise.

The quartet plays without the sac from time to time, and the results are always impressive but the album comes over as a showcase for Perelman because he is often stunning. Form this is a brilliant, exemplary performance both in terms of technical proficiency and emotional power, but he never gets carried away with his own agenda. The relationship with the quartet is genuinely interactive and fraternal, and there are some remarkable incidents of tonal cross-dressing, calling for our double takes before you can decide whether a sound is made by strings need a skilful blending of both or a supernatural synthesis of something Irish and unknown. Highly recommended.

PAUL WITHEREDEN

EAR

Data Rape

SPACE AGE 008/010/013 CD

EAR

Death Of A Robot (For The Radiophonic Workshop)

DOIRE DOX35 9

Coloursound

Soundtrack For An Imaginary Life

SPACE AGE 008/010/019 CD

You could never dismiss Sonic Boom (aka Pete Kimber) as unimaginative, even he work with Spacemen 3 sought to expand parameters of sound. That chrysalis manifested into the boundary-stretching philosophies of Ear in 1990, and has now evolved into these innovative Data Rape experiments. These collages were assembled using eight human voice synthesizers longingly marketed as Speak And Spell toys by Texas Instruments during the late '70s — you can just about detect the briefest snatches of synthesized American computer speech! which have been customised and reverb through a process called circuit-bending. It creates a whole series of irregular oscillations by exploiting the instabilities of the audio instruments and by passing data between the unrelated internal circuit boards. Electronic sounds are modified by random signals into a

variety of pitches and pulses, resulting in Data Rape's mesh of vocal noises and blips. You may not think so, but there's a strand of discipline concealed in this freeform, indiscriminate Electronica. It creeps up on you gradually, as the vibrations provide intoxicating comfort, in much the same way as the Ambient work of Enya or Labrador. *Death Of A Robot* is a crude structure, but it's also a highly original order of music.

The *Death Of A Robot* single is a continuation of the Data Rape experiments. Released on limited 9" vinyl, it's a 20 minute score to the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop's *Dr Who* scores. Over the 30 years since the series began, the Workshop's electronic music has been a principal source of inspiration for much of today's leftfield Electronica. The chilly atmospherics of 'Death Of A Robot' captures the essence of their work, but ultimately fails to convey the genuine diversity of an undervalued institution.

Soundtrack For An Imaginary Life released on Kimber's Space Age label is Coloursound's second album. It dispenses with the throbbing drones and resounding guitar of 1995's *You're Only As Good As Your Sound*. The new disc's lighter compositions are alluring and hypnotic, if somewhat New Age.

Soundtrack has undoubtedly absorbed elements of Coloursound mainman Matthew J. Tipp's pop psychadelic group Drea City, but its man appeal is a desire, mesmeric ambience is sedate enough to make you feel like you're ingesting a mild anaesthetic. It's a soothing experience like floating in an ornithon tank, but presumably a whole lot cheaper.

YVONNE PAVLA RIC

Exhaust

Exhaust

CONSTELLATION CST004 LP

Despite Godspeed You Black Emperor's aversion to technology and their puritan commitment to live performance, their drummer Adam Ant's solo project *Exhaust* happily exploits studio wizardry.

As with all the releases on Godspeed's Hotel Transylva Constellation label, *Exhaust* is beautifully packaged piece of vinyl comes with screenprinted jacket and thick card inserts. Their manifesto in French asserts their distaste for labels like rock 'n' roll. Techno and encourages bewailed puritans to find out about their music by connecting them directly rather than getting their information from the media. If you'd better stay here and call your travel agent!

In their more inspired moments, *Exhaust* hijack the driven rhythmic crack of *The Head* when they plough through doomy, simpleton throb tick. Elsewhere, though, big boomy breakdowns and surging reefs of noise sound to stadium pleasing and obvious, they're worlds away from parent group Godspeed's predilection for slow hypnotic movements. The Black Horns Of H21? does board some fantastic circular clarinet work,

courtesy of multi-instrumentalist Gordon Knecht, but this only serves to further confuse matters. The inclusion of two 'deconstructions' of previous tracks is yet more evidence of a severe identity crisis.

It's a mess that further reinforces the belief that one idea ruthlessly pursued is the visionary's easy path to enlightenment. Exhaust are lost and aimless.

DAVID KIRKMAN

Michael Finnissy

Kreutzer Quartet

PETERSON/PIVOT 011 CD

Here are seven of Michael Finnissy's string quartets recorded in St John's Church, Loughborough, using a pair of microphones. Sound engineer producer, digital editor, cover designer and booklet editor David Leibler who also runs the label. Such dedication is not unusual for Nonesuch supporters, who tend to be partisans claiming that he is one of the few real composers to have emerged in England this century.

Exposure to the music, encourages us to decide the point. Finnissy makes no modish nods towards the popular, but his extremism brings him into the orbit of other radical sounds. *Plan Harmony* was composed in the early 90s. A pure descending melody that could be an English madrigal meets warped chords simultaneously shimmering and rugged. Finnissy refuses to make the choice between traditional tonality and 12 tone, iron-chord voicings and atonal crises together create his highly personal texture. Nor is lyricism eschewed; indeed, melody is pursued with such passion it churns up mud from the unconscious. Clean harmonic and chaotic mark operate dialectically, transforming themselves into each other in unexpected twists and turns.

Pure serenades can be abstract and pretty (eg Matjaž Bobiček); with Finnissy, each record hunk Nobož's Jig (1982) is a reminder of the unerring nature of discerning the key system. Even the swiftness of the violins is sick and insular, wheeling high notes are taught with anguish. Yet the composer's focus is clinical — sweetened terror frozen into an crystal intervals,窄窄 between instruments like thought hesitating between options. An energetic violin makes an unresponsive cello sound like feedback hum — alienated guitars against a backdrop of urban noise pollution. At the same time any note may bleed into the background and affect the whole. Finnissy undermines music's sense of affiliation, suggesting parallel to A Handful Of Dust or Richard Youngs.

The initial theme of *Multiple Forms Of Constraint* (1997) is a folksy or Beethoven might have employed, but instead of initiating responsive dialogue, it provides a slurry of interference and malign echo. Like a people insomnia, revolving an insoluble problem the music cannot relax, but nevertheless generates beautiful violin lines, intricately plotted without a trace of cliché. Song

Teiji Ito

King Ubu

TAOICD 117096 CD

The Beach Boys

Endless Harmony: OST

CAPITOL 724349919126 CD

Opposite ends of the spectrum you might think: one of the most successful pop groups of all time matched with one of the least known composers of the past 50 years. Yet fame or the lack of it can mask a lot of other qualities. At the end of the century I feel that the polar extremes of Brian Wilson and Teiji Ito have something in common.

Slotting the various unreleased obscurities, scraps, live recordings and alternate mixes of *Endless Harmony* into my own personalised Beach Boys story (a construction of memories, speculation, official history, scurrilous rumour and bootleg patchwork), I see Brian Wilson as a composer whose talent was self-destructive. As endless as the mythic summer, the vastness, versatility and mass appeal of that talent overshadowed his central agenda, which was to make a heartfelt intimate music innocent of stylistic restrictions. Commonplace experiences and emotions were amplified to levels of feeling that Brian would call spiritual, yet he never resorted to bombast.

Every Beach Boys track was performable by a rock 'n' roll band. The epitome of this musical approach — let's call it 'small music', for want of a better term — was Smiley Smile. A kind of Beach Boys (Acid) Party record, Smiley Smile was music you could make with your family, sitting around in a sandpit with a melodica and some wind chimes (plus a genius songwriter, perfect harmony voices, limitless studio time and drugs, and some of the best session musicians in the world).

The soundtrack to the recent documentary film, *Endless Harmony*, the CD, eavesdrops on Brian demoralising the frighteningly complex "Heroes And Villains", just piano and voice, and making the song work; we also hear a beautiful live performance, from Carnegie Hall, of "Wonderful", one of the most delicately human songs from Smiley Smiley Smile. Tracks like engineer Stephen Desper's vibraphone mix of "I'll Die", previously available only on bootleg, or the live-in-the-studio version of "God Only Knows", stop the songs back to their essence, gorgeous but painful. This slow leakage of unreleased fragments builds up an image, probably illusory,



Baba wonder: Teiji Ito

of what Brian Wilson might have creased had he not been so hugely successful from his teen years.

Success was neither an obstacle nor an option to Teiji Ito. Aside from soundtracks that can be heard on the films of his wife, Maya Deren, Ito's work had vanished into near-oblivion. Maya Deren died in 1951; Ito died in Han in 1982. Then out of the blue, *Heshe* was released by the *What Next?* label last year, and now Guy Klucevsek and John Zorn have resurrected his 1961 score for Alfred Jarry's play, *Ubu Roi*. "Honstrumpon!" as Pa Ubu would say.

Ajan, it's 'small music', in the best sense music you can make by yourself, with a tape recorder, some simple instruments and a clear vision. I can imagine compiling a ho-ho bootleg that passed off tracks like "Mama Ubu's Dance" or "Music Box" (a version of "Where Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone" for glass bottles and thumb pencils) as undiscovered Smile demos abandoned by Brian Wilson during his cutlery period, simply because the warmth and stylistic freedom of Ito's music is so similar in spirit.

A whole strain of improvisation is anticipated here by Ito's use of 'exotic' instruments and electronic manipulations; his vocal explorations, his strange juxtapositions, his focus on the human scale. His humour, I'm reminded, for example, of Willem Breuker's theatre music of the late 60s, though Ito's wit charms rather than bludgeons. Most of all, I'm reminded of Teiji Ito, a quiet, uncool voice now audible to those prepared to listen.

DAVID TOOP

sensibility, as well as his ability to subsume a distinctive approach to improvisation within a refined compositional identity. The lovely lyrical alto solo that introduces "Emerald" encapsulates these aspects of Berne's playing while the closing 'Be' instant' plus an effortless trajectory from post-bop inflections to post-Cotgrave dissonance.

Berne says that he rechristened his Screechin' label with the desire to release own name recordings by some of the musicians whose talents have been integral to his success. Marc Ducret's recent CD, and now Formanek's *I'm Bothering You*, a recording of solo acoustic bass, more than satisfy this show of fate. The material may be improvised or composed (the closing version of Muddy Waters' "Rolling Stone" is the only cover — but it is certainly carefully considered). The material ranges from the percussive ("Crowhouse"), via guttural rubato passages ("Overhead Justice") and amber almost funkily thumping ("Diesel Shortbread") to melancholy bowing in the song's upper registers ("Theremin"). The attention to textual detail in the recording is exacting, ensuring a raised level of listening pleasure: is that the sound of Formanek's shirt crackling over his body? Or do I just have an overactive imagination? When you're drawn in to listen, the closely you're in another zone.

TIM EWEN

Global Electronic Network

g.e.n. attack!

HARVEST 724 38857 9411 CD/LP

Khan & Walker

Simplex 01-05

HARVEST CD

h.e.a.d.

97 98

HARVEST 724 38956121 CD/1LP

Dr Walker & M Flux

16 Lovelessness For The Spice Girls

HARVEST 724 349381425 CD

Kerosene

Woman Quality

PARMA 19621 CD/LP

Witchman Vs Jammin' Unit

Infesto

BLUE PLANET CD

Throughout the decade, Air Leader's singer Koch (aka Luu Walker) and Com Oral (aka Jammin' Unit) have generated a dizzy array of pseudonyms, collaborations, labels and musical styles — it would take an obsessive compulsive of the most determined kind to trace all the releases linked to them. In typically prolific fashion, this month sees another six albums (another six hours of music!) throwing up a few more minute variations on mid-tempo electronic dance music.

Quarter (1984) has a narrative structure bravely stepping out from the systems codification of so much modern composition. It begins softly, a field of subliminal impulses after seven minutes; there's a jumpy intro lassitude, as if floodlights had been switched on. Dimmacy violins jeer at each other like gulls alternating with violent pluckings from the lower instruments. It sounds simple, but Hinsley is stretching his players — irrational tempos and unexpected intervals — so there's none of the pop condescension of boom-boom Minimalism.

This release makes no concessions to the mass market. Two members of the quartet contribute essays. They're so immersed in Fennelly's music they don't stop to think how the music might sound to people unversed in modern classical music. Fennelly hollows out the romantic legacy from the inside, springing lines so tense they sound as if they are traced on a bomb ready to explode. Perhaps the fibrous beauty admired by Hinsley's devotees is not so much the prelude of art as the ring of truth.

RON WATSON

Michael Formanek

Am I Bothering You?

SCREWUP SCRUL70009 CD

Tim Berne & Michael Formanek

Oriente People

LITTLE BROTHER RECORDS LBB113 CD

Oriente People strips Tim Berne's music down to the bare essentials in a duet setting for his saxes and Michael Formanek's bass. The session emphasises his keen melodic

German Harvest has picked up the first three albums in this batch from the New York-based El Turco Loco label run by Can Oral (aka Khan and Cem's brother). Much of the music seems to have been generated during a trip that Ingmar Koch made to the States earlier this year. Global Eclectic Network is the game under which Can Oral and Koch explore rough, compulsive but carefully orchestrated grooves with a fine array of nifty Acid touches *given attack!* It's a 20 minute long mini-album. Its conclusion means that the chunky tracks remain effective throughout.

As Khan and Walker, the same pair produced Simplex 01-05 during the same sessions. Here they explore a set of minimal circular ignorances which amount to energetic elaborations on a single rhythm pattern, dabbling it with smoky, moody streaks of abstract noise, and dropping percussive elements in and out with dubious finesse.

Also in America, Khan and fellow ex-Asian Roger Cobus (aka Kerzene) linked up over the New Year to continue their head project 97-98 as a final example of the sly, saucy and friendly welcome humour that permeates Cologne's Electronica scene. It's an immaculately conceived selection of enigmatic lounge funk, revealing in titles like 'It's Funky Enough', 'It's Funky Enough' and 'Two Packed To Rap Too Drunk To Rock', and pecking off its loose-limbed rhythms with a plethora of tactile switches and slurs.

Even more light-hearted – at least in conception – is the 16 LoveSongs For The Spice Girls collaboration between Dr Walker and the mysterious Boehm-based M-Flux, a recent addition to the Air Liquide network. With its vintage pomo artwork and suggestive titles ('Jack These Spice Stiffs'), for one this album is in part a manifestation of Ingmar Koch's fascination with club cheese. He recently navigated Steuerflucht, imminent promises to explore the crazy world of Balkan, smut in obsessive detail. Despite its sordid frivolousness, however, 76 LoveSongs For The Spice Girls is fundamentally serious. The music is sparse, tight and questioning with jaigent floridating additions. The 'comedy' chatbox interludes seem designed to raise sociological questions more than schlocky laughter.

In similar vein is Kerzene's solo album for Cem Oral's Pheme label (Woman Quality), strengths are neatly demonstrated by the title cut, a driving, insistent ten minute neo-Electro workout which augments the minimal beats with searing, scorching, overdriven zones and artfully arranged SPX sterging stuff.

Finally, the London based Witchman (aka John Roome) gets his hands on Jammin' Unit's fine Deep Dub And Rend album and twists it into the moody shapes of infamy. Abandoning the contorted drum in bass of previous outings, Roome instead develops a causticating way with annotated breaks and slow-motion reverbs – it makes for an involving journey, littered with splintered guitar and shadowy cries.

CHRIS SHARP

Peter Hammill

Thus
FEARLESS

Peter Blegvad

Hungerman & Hill
WIPED CO

This is British singer-songwriter Peter Hammill's 40th album, released on the eve of his 50th birthday statistics which underline a consciousness objection to rock's fashion-conscious fancies. When Progressive rock grew bloated and monotonous, Hammill's Van Der Graaf Generator persisted in its maverick brand of disputation, dissonant rock, and when punk finally brought down the Prig brigade in the mid to late '70s he continued to hone his prodigious songwriting skills year on year with solo albums of uncompromising dogmatism. Always the auteur, he is the Ingmar Bergman of rock, obsessively exploring a cluster of cherished existential themes like Time, Consciousness and Memory and wisely working with a small team of distinctive long-term associates. Appropriately he now controls the means of production with his own recording studio, Terra Incognita and label. Feat an acquired taste, his finest work is rich and dark, with a bitter tang.

Compared to 1997's superb yet scandalously under-reviewed *Everyone You Hear* this conforms the listener in a more direct manner with less emphasis on detailed arrangements. The mislaysers of brooding guitars and electronics have mostly made way for a riff-oriented energy – except the rats' seldom appear where you'd expect them. On 'Unrehearsed' they come in two-thirds of the way through with Hammill's guitars grinding away beneath David Jackson's scolding guitar. Hammill cleverly punctuates 'Shape' with two shrieked mezzosilchi melismata echoed by Jackson's siren and a jag in the middle guitar patchwork. This is also a hint of Middle Eastern texture in Stuart Gordon's eden on 'Nightmare' and 'Fallen (The City Of Night)' sees his polyphonic FX soar above the formidable bass density that begins to dominate the mix. The drums reaches a ferociously intense 'Always Is Next' driven by the alternative power of Hammill's canals and grunting vocal performance. 'The Light Constraint' the longest track here at 14 minutes, closes the album returning to those evocative, brooding electronics, as Hammill's subdued vocals set forth a vision of polar expanse and human insignificance.

Peter Blegvad has also long enjoyed cult singer-songwriter status. Although remotorised by his recordings with seminal avant-garde Henry Cow and singer-bassist John Greaves this is the first time he's heard one of his solo albums. And if *Hannibal's HR* is typical here then the quality leaves a lot to be desired. Apart from Blegvad's madly eccentric lyrics the rest is MOR rock that wouldn't offend a Joan Armatrading fan. Even Greaves and Chris Cutler's contributions sound decidedly ordinary in this bland context.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Chris Knox

Yma!
FLYING NUN RECORDS 2100

Peter Jefferies

Substematic
EMPEROR JONES E130 CO

In the early days of the Flying Nun label and the New Zealand pop-primitive explosion, it was Chris Knox, four track deck under his arm who dominated most of it. Previously a farcical-porn loon thorning NZ garage legends The Enemy he went on to form the bizarre mutant-folk duo Tolk Dwarfs and to periodically release solo documents of his halucinogenic-heavy psych post. Yma! Knox's solo LP is a neatly rewarding foray into the nether-regions of a benign yet deeply lived mind.

Knox has always had a precise grip of vocal quirkiness, it's no surprise that he is often uttered in the same breath as Syd Barrett and Roky Erickson. Like Syd especially he's capable of the kind of from-the-heart speech and insanely pecked castrating that causes even grown men to stiff. In 'Plethora' he's come up trumps with yet another stomach-churning belated outsiders. He sodakes twinkling hymnals ('Gold'), staggeringly rockabilly and from 'Cries'-era Lou Reed ('Tansanique To Trassury') before wrapping the whole thing up with a battered 17-minute plus of dense tape collage.

Peter Jefferies is another NZ musician who has been patrolling the farthest reaches of fire though since the early 80s. Substematic is a weightier, more chaotic counterpart to the nocturnal instrumentalists of his own album with Jon Lowe: *At Swam Two Birds* (recently reissued by Drunken Fish).

He builds up tension over four long rhythmic workouts, which are occasionally spattered by anarchic spurts of heavily rattled guitar. Yet they all anticipate the steady resonance of the closing 'Three Movements', a fluke-like, 16 minute ramification over semi-melodic drifts of piano, remnant of early Kraftwerk's cosmic chuff. High pitched guitar scratches around the periphery as the keyboard slowly winces the track down into changed silence.

GAVIN KEEGAN

Robert M Lepage & Martin Tétreault

Calles La Dova Et Le Vinylo
ARMACES PHAGETIQUES AM971D

René Lussier & Martin Tétreault

Sur Noyau Dur
ARMACES PHAGETIQUES AM971D

Intended as a homage to both Mana Calas on the 20th anniversary of her death, and to her record company EMI in its centenary year, *Calles La Dova Et Le Vinylo* is a series of duets for clarinet and turntables that are as poorly executed as they are conceptually

fawed. Not content with exploring the grain of a recorded voice in as charged relationship with the fluid tonalities of a solo woodwind instrument, Lepage and Tétreault indulge instead in a grotesque ventriloquist act whereby the dead opera star is made to yap like a poodle on 'Les Géniches', impersonate a car alarm on 'Le Système D Alerte' (she) then shriek and huff her way along to the bump and grind of a home workout LP on 'Golafeebo'. Only when the duo launch into a gauche approximation of exotic 'Easy Listening' on 'Yma! Cries' does it become clear just how over that thinking on this project has gone. Possessing a vocal range of over four and a half octaves Yma Sumac sounds vinyl in a way that Mana Calas never could. What makes Calas an international celebrity was not the sonic essence of the stereophonic hi-fi system but the glowing intimacy of the television screen. Always a visible disk it was as necessary to read the flickering emotional responses in her face as it was to hear her voice when she sang. For all the inanities which Lepage and Tétreault seek to pile upon her, Calas still eludes them.

More successfully far are the acid-etched landscapes to be found on Guy Moissi's *Our Terrene* on turntables pick-up and radio receiver; shows such a marked rapport with Rene Lussier's electric and acoustic guitars that some genuine sparks are struck during the course of these predominantly short pieces. Recorded live in the studio with a minimum of overdubs, the set clicks and hums with radioactive menace. Like a Ginger counter picking up atomic parades in the air, the interplay captures a thin ring of tiny sounds which are then amplified alarmingly. The result is a layered atmosphere after revealing the freeform potential of the record deck as a compositional tool. The being a CD however watch out for the hidden track at the end.

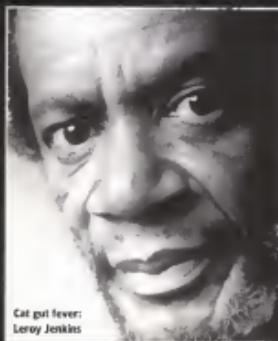
KEN HOLLINGS

William Parker

Through Acceptance Of The Mystery Prince
ARMACES PHAGETIQUES AM971CD

Eremite is a tiny independent label based in Northampton Massachusetts that's attempting to resurrect, promote and push forward free jazz in the late 90s with the same kind of enthusiasm that ESP-Disk did in the late 60s. To date the label has released a dozen CDs, each of which holds something of interest for those jazz morts who are still irresistibly attracted to the inner burning flame of the New York loft experience. Occasionally Eremite release a classic example of the genre, and bass player Willem Parker's *Through Acceptance Of The Mystery Prince* is one of these. Originally released on his own Corazon Records label in 1981 in an edition of 500 copies,

Parker's debut was inspired by the music of



Cat got fever:
Leroy Jenkins

Leroy Jenkins

Solo

LOVELY MUSIC LCD9061 CD

Lovely Music is not a record company to be hurried or pressurised into an injudicious release. It proceeds at its own measured pace and ensures that each issue is a landmark of its kind. In 1990 it produced a superb CD of solo violin improvisations by Takehisa Kosugi. Now it registers another milestone with this very different but equally absorbing violin/viola set from Leroy Jenkins.

Jenkins's playing in itself sufficiently justifies the existence of Chicago's Association for the

Advancement of Creative Music, which he joined in 1965. The climate of exploration nurtured in his collaborations with Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith and Mihail Richard Abrams enabled Jenkins to confidently pursue the extension of the violin's expressive range. The group took from John Cage's pronouncements additional permission to approach every instrument as a total configuration; in other words, they assumed freedom from obligation to play within recognised parameters or to utilise only inherited techniques.

Freedom brings its own responsibilities, and Jenkins has always appeared highly disciplined, as well as relentlessly inventive. It is a combination that has taken him into suitably elevated company: he has worked with Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp and Ornette Coleman. One of the peaks of his career was reached during the 1970s as a member of the Revolutionary Ensemble. Bassist Sironne and percussionist Jerome Cooper provided ideal settings for the metier, yet still evoking Jenkins-style. A further high point was reached with *Solo Concert*, released by India Navigation in 1977. This *Lovely* release offers a rare opportunity to experience another uncompromised performance on both violin and viola. It's been a long time coming. The recording was actually made in 1992, at a concert before an appreciative audience in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Jazz listeners have habitually regarded the violin with suspicion, accepting the instrument's presence with an evocative bordering on mistrust. Occasionally musicians have emerged with the capacity to quell such uneasiness. Classically, Stiff Smith and — Duke Ellington's choice — Ray Nance; subsequently, Jean-Luc Ponty and Didier Lockwood at

their most inspired, and Jenkins's erstwhile pupil Billy Bang, have attained a level of acceptance. More than any of them, Jenkins has succeeded in securing respect, not merely through instrumental skill, but by his singular capacity to redefine the idiom.

Solo includes a stirring interpretation of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps", and an eloquent reading of Dizzy Gillespie's "Wouldn't You". Yet neither here nor in his original compositions does Jenkins subordinate his musical judgment to the dictates of generic convention. He plays his own music, an intensely personal mode of expression, instantly recognisable yet entirely free from cliché. His approach derives little from European tradition; titles such as "Blues #1", "Folk Song" and "Keep On Truckin' Brother" seem designed to signal his detachment from that legacy. Ornette Coleman's excursions on violin surely left their mark, but Jenkins's execution has far more overt precision; it is more deliberate, yet at the same time ostentatiously more effortless.

The dynamic of his playing is purposefully linear, but as he unravels the latent possibilities of basic melodic materials, he works continual transformations through rhythmic and textural variation. Any sound which the instrument potentially contains is available for his use. There is a rare clarity to the shape of his improvisations, but it never appears that the violinist is going through the motions, in accordance with some a prior template. Nor does the stream of invention ever lapse into banal strivings for effect. In short, this is a magisterial and exemplary demonstration of the improvisor's art, beautifully controlled, yet open to surprise.

JULIAN COWLEY

(REVIEWED BY JULIAN COWLEY) Underworld news re:

Plastikman (1991). Kenneth Goldsmith signs Brakage, Jonas Mekas and David Duren and (more importantly) the writing of Kenneth Patchen. These diverse elements were then further explored by Parker and his assembled band of players for a series of sessions that were recorded between 1974 and 1979. Five different ensembles were also set up, ranging from a simple two to a full blown octet. Those involved included soft touch scorers such as saxophonists Danie Carter, Charles Brackeen and Jemeel Moondoc, horn player Toshinori Kondo, cellist Tristan Honsinger, violinists Billy Bang and Poly Brufeldt plus many others. Music subliminal abstract imagery and spoken prose converge together throughout the record to form five near flawless examples of free expression which bravely resist the temptation to amorphously blow off steam for the sake of it. There is a sense of unhampered organisation at work here, and as well as being a showcase for Parker's shrill bass playing the solo at the heart of the opening entitled 'Desert Flower' being one example to treasure! The feeling comes

across that it is here that *Plastikman* took the next giant step in its evolutionary process and growings.

EDWARD POUNCEY

Plastikman

Artfile (12C)

REPRISE RECORDS 12LP/CD

Plastikman is mostly a collection of material originally intended for *Plastikman's* projected third album *Flora*, which was shelved after he was deported from the USA in 1995. Back in Ontario *Plastikman* also chose Hauan, recorded *Consumed* in Atlanta. Atlanta therefore forms a useful bridge between his second album *Muse* and the crumpling wastelands of *Consumed*. It is a sick but curiously unsparing affair that doesn't throw much light on the shifts that occurred between *Muse* and *Consumed*. It neither reveals any alternative advances on the former, nor does it bear much relation to the shaped down cubby experimentation of either the later or *Hauan's* *Concept 12* series. On *Consumed*, Hauan inverted the mood of the earlier

Concept tracks to kick out a dark, tellurian interzone of eerie strings, rumbling bass (like cavernous thuds and a fuzzy, peripheral disturbance), Where *Consumed* radically softened the earlier sady placated pulsations to a flickering bare. *Atlanta* coheres around a purist sensibility drawn from the nightmarish atmospheres of classic Detroit weightless sweeping strings, busting BOB percussion, and a reliance on the Acid modulations of "Haukondak". The overwhelming pulse of "Skinned", offer the only real insights and escape routes out of this sickly retro-fit insouciance. While the album retains Hauan's concern with the construction of a deep surreal architecture, tantalising the listener to get lost in its slowly shifting environs, it too often resorts to the known to achieve it. Where Phuture pushed the 303 to its limits, on *Atlanta* Hauan seems content to sum up a tightly controlled series of familiar breakthroughs. Nothing unheard or unexpected, he is simply sleepwalking. In the light of the advances made by the Concept tracks and *Consumed*, *Atlanta* comes across as regressive and low on ideas.

DAVID HOWELL

Project Dark

Excerpted By Gramophones
Volume 4

PARISIENNE RECORDS PARSA 102-III

Forget vinyl! what about the sonic properties of cheese? Project Dark's limited edition 7" singles were manufactured from preposterous materials — white bread, Edam cheese or the Berlin glasspaper sheet, and so on. This reluctant CD — a Stevenson reggae the use of the format — treats the contents of their entire singles back catalogue as source material. The music's aesthetic is best summed up by the image on the back of the CD — an exploding turntable.

Though drum patterns are used on some tracks, most of the music is concerned with manipulations of rough sound. The album begins with the noise of a firework rocket and moves into a succession of succinct and briefly sound pieces, covering a wide range of colours and fascinated with the blurring into noise. However, only the minute-long "Juke's Driving" is really committed to the familiar territory of howling electric viscera tweaking

The next depends more on the often raged sound textures of the source material. The longest, the eight minute "Spongers", moves from calm drift into a drum'n'base sequence overlaid with a rasping, honking sound and, towards the end, explosions. This is where the strengths of the music come across most forcefully when Project Dark are not tied up in dull art-terrorist posturing and steer well clear of whimsy. On four of the best tracks the Project Dark nucleus – Ashley Davies, Kristen Reynolds and Tony Patterson – is augmented by Dub Colossus of Transglobal Underground (elsewhere, collaborators include arista-headbopper Billy Childish). For all the noise input, the music works best through playfulness. Low-tal avant garde for sure, but somehow with near zero gravitas and a lurking pop sensibility, it's diverting stuff. But it's a more wholesome racket than they'd like it to be.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Eliane Radigue
Songs Of Milorepa
LOWLY MUSIC (CD/DIGITAL DOWNLOAD)

Eliane Radigue
Trilogie De La Mort
X RECORDS (119) 3100

Taken separately, *Songs Of Milorepa* and *Trilogie De La Mort* stand as landmarks of Minimalism; together they confirm Eliane Radigue as a unique and major voice in contemporary music. Radigue was born in Paris and still lives in France. She studied techniques of electroacoustic composition with Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry, but her extensive work in America has exposed her to other approaches to composing and performing. At New York University's electronic music centre, for example, she came into contact in the early 1970s with Morton Subotnick, La Monte Young and Rhys Chatham. At that point she was equipped technically to produce interesting work, but in 1975 the course of her musical development underwent a radical shift, along with the rest of her life: when she became seriously committed to Tibetan Buddhism. Four years later, after experiencing the rigours of retreat, she returned to writing music. Immensely disciplined, she works slowly and her recorded output is small, but 1998 is a watershed year, seeing the release of these two monumental musical cycles.

Songs Of Milorepa, completed in 1983, comprises five pieces, settings of texts by the 11th century Tibetan saint; it is named after Radigue used an analogue ARP synthesiser to generate a subdued bed of drones and gentle pulses. Droning tones seem to evoke the passage of clouds through cold air, while watery sunlight shimmers on distant mountain peaks. Little seems to change yet, somehow there is a sense of continual motion. Over that backdrop, Radigue

introduces two venerable voices: Lhamo Kunga Rinpoche, born in Lhasa in the wood pig year, chants delightfully in Tibetan; Robert Ashley, born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1930, then recites a translation. Ashley's vocalised Himalayan born is the perfect vehicle for these parables of rural Tibet's pastures and canyons. Lovely flute issued the first two songs on vinyl in 1983. The central sections, available now for the first time, confirm the stature of the cycle. The hour long concluding part, "Milo's Journey Inspired By A Dream", appeared on CD in 1987, but here its culminating descent into a churning blur of monastic chanting and murky electronic sonorities assumes its full potency.

Trilogie De La Mort, an extended sonic meditation on death and birth is arguably still more impressive. Its opening sequence, "Kyema, Intermediate States", was released in 1988 and appeared on a previous XJ CD in 1990. Here are drones, waves and pulses again. Not the stark sustained tones of Philip Niblock's music, but a constant agitation of micro-events within an ostensibly static composition. Comparison might be made with the apparently static works of Guerino Scelsi, an Italian composer also steeped in Oriental philosophy who paid similar attention to the inner life of sound. The resulting music is very different, but both Radigue and Scelsi have consciously sought enlightenment through the discipline of hearing. On a more superficial level, the solipsistic resonance that emerges in "Kyema" may recall the esoteric tone poems of Brian Eno's *On Land*. But no Ordnance Survey map covers the terrain Radigue is exploring. The non-Euclidean space of *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead* was her inspiration, and an entire cosmology is implied through this music. "Kallaha", the second part, traces a turbulent imaginary journey around the most sacred mountain in the Himalayas, a route reputed to lead into other spheres of being. Radigue's notes to "Kounou", the final part, affirm doctrines of rebirth through Christian references, but the soundworld is entirely consistent with the earlier sections. Parallels with other music may assist the uninitiated, but Radigue's work is truly unique. The singularity of her achievement only enhances its magnitude.

JULIAN COWLEY

Sam Rivers & Tony Hymas
Eight Day Journal
LOWLY 777726 CD

The idea of a European composer inviting over an American jazz legend to play to specially created music is intriguing. Recorded in a studio in 1998, Eight Day Journal documents a project put together by Tony Hymas after discussions at Instant Chiaroscuro, a concert hosted of French Improv and experimentation. The 13 piece orchestra includes Leicester-born trumpeter

Henry Lowther, French guitarist Noel Akchote and an English rhythm section of Chris Laurence and Paul Clares, plus woodwinds and strings.

Hymas's arrangements are bright and busy, folding togerher Stevansky, Weil and Braxton with motifs from romanticism, Minimalism and jazz. Unfortunately we don't seem to hear much from Sam Rivers. An early exchange with Alphonse Ion ("Searched 4 Hans 1984") has him burble and screech manfully, but thereafter he's lost in a patchwork of song-melancholic drawing room tangos and Mingus-pasteque blues. Michael Carless ("Freewave" for Pharoah Sanders) isn't Playing is faultless, but so clean it lacks expressive pungency. Hymas's eclecticism winds us in an ebbing of tides like incidental music for a theatrical production. Rivers plays well, but with no one to match him emotionally, he too begins to sound glibly and decorative.

The booklet has watercolours by cartoonist Moebius. His revival of Belle epoque railway poster graphics is evidently meant to be smart and surreal — likewise the music's decanted assembly of known techniques. There's sad romantic colour, overblown Dophymish clatter, some jazz guitar, but nothing is pursued firmly enough to achieve a technical breakthrough; it's a sequence of inert neoclassical panels. The already known presented without transformative or historical thrust becomes merely decorative.

To see what the music lacks compare Willem Breuker's use of similar materials: we hear Savagery, Instigation, Spontaneity, bite. Technical invention and social critique are close reasons in music, and there's too little of that in Hymas to unleash the Sam Rivers we admire.

BEN WATSON

Steve Roden
Crop Circles
TRINITY ORGANIC AD00771 CD

It doesn't look promising to begin with. Los Angeles artist Steve Roden's *Crop Circles* was generated for an installation that formed part of a Malibu exhibition entitled *They Come From Beyond*. The sleepwalkers go on about the crop circle in "a trace, an index of a presence unknowable".

Downplaying alien themes, however, the album functions well as a piece of soft-edged active ambience. It is the first release in a new Trinity Ossuary series entitled *Ancient Element*. *D'Osseaux* (bird furniture) which develops Saito's idea of furniture music — music that does not demand the full engagement of the listener.

Crop Circles is a 42-minute work made entirely from samples of a microphone interacting with a loudspeaker. The main components are high frequencies, a dominant scraping sound, distant clicks and a muffled, pitchshifting hum that seems to represent the necessary figure of darkness



EDITH FROST + TELESCOPIC

(DING DONG)
Second full length release from Murphy Royal, Teachernot Shred and Ryan Henley (Phew!) helping out. "Telescopic" plays on the eye, the sexual, the human. It's unpredictable, new, evocative and vibrantly horrific."



BOX-HEAD ENSEMBLE
- THE LAST PLACE TO GO

(IMPROV)
Magnificently eccentric garage band, members of Ministry, Bootsy Bell, Sol, Palace, 11th Floor and Eddie Frost



BARBARA MANNING
IN NEW ZEALAND

(COMMISSION)
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CHICAGO UNDERGROUND DUO
- 12 DEGREES OF FREEDOM

(RIFT JACKET)
Bob Mains of Instinct 21 and Chad Taylor come together as Mains. Adds Jeff Parker of Tortoise. Includes 21 tracks.

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soundcheck

The general mood and sound palette of the piece hardly vary but the various components are arranged in offering ways. Loops are used, here Rothen's not interested in repetition as rhythm. The aim & to create a shifting, that consistent atmosphere within which the listener can go about other business. The feeling of continual change within narrow parameters succeeds in quietly engaging the parts of the semi-attentive mind - the piece certainly makes good use of its sharply defined contours. A problem is that the key hammering loop is too dependent on the worn out microtonal musical trope of the *west*. Remaining in a mild way, in the end but if it were a chair I'm not sure I'd want to sit in.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Ryuichi Sakamoto

Love Is The Devil, OST
MUSICA, 1998, 60'

Lech Jankowski

Institute Bemerska, OST
ATELIER KONRAD KONODA, LD

It has to be said that one can be a tonic. I feared that Ryuichi Sakamoto was being coerced into a cut-and-sew of undressed romanticism by cinema's current obsession with simple orchestral themes. His music was always romantic and melodic, but at his best on tracks like 'Rot In Lagos' or YMO's 'Happy End', he barbed romanticism with a neurotic, twitchy edge.

John Maybury's *Love Is The Devil*, the story of Francis Bacon's affair with failed burglar George Dyer, is a gift for any composer prepared to get their hands bloody. Spooky post-Industrial Beethovenian on its own will do. The response of Bacon in his propensity to love (at least as portrayed by Maybury) is extraordinarily complex, absolute dominance yet a need for outshun domestic tenderness and psychological brutality, a rejection of Dyer in the priest, a longing for him in the past. Bacon's most intense, sustained energies devoted to his panoply of Dyer as a tormented figure of nightmare in paintings, the red Dyer more or less abandoned to actual nightmares, finally abandoning himself to suicide in a Parisian hotel as he image is celebrated in a gory nearby.

What Sakamoto captures so beautifully with minimal means is the queasy pregnancy of this hopeless romance: the savage cuts between near-ordinary love and the exfoliation of those dark places where Bacon let at peace where Dyer could only perish in horror, drowning in drink and pills. All at sea in the vastness viral ultrasound of the Colony Club, stranded by class war at the boxing. Dyer's disintegration is a collapse of grand and pathetic gesture. Mainstream Bacon paints with controlled fury tongue lashes his boozey court, swivels the severs of the city, peers ranges and moves on.

So how to underscore all of this without

falling into typically British cinema clichés of period signifiers? Currently enmeshed of noise, Ryuichi goes for gloriously electric piano and sounds and explosive electronics. This has its virtues, and for electronic noise, the other for being noisy. Electronic noise has become the equivalent of the saxophone in free jazz, an awful lot of would-be musicians can approximate the effect but very few seem able to express more than the basic act of doing it. Clearly moved by the story's contradictions, the claustrophobia of its environment, Sakamoto draws on his experience as one of the pioneers of Electronica, conjuring up monstrous insectile worms of psychic terrors, electric jolts of dislocation, floating bubbles of disturbed memory. We double-disoriented through a champagne glass and through Bacon's inner eye.

If Sakamoto's take on grime is cool musique concrète from the 1950s jungled into the overmeditated image-vets of the late 1990s, Lech Jankowski's Post-pasteiche reminds me at times it does. *Tøy Horns* (also reviewed elsewhere in this issue) of Dutch folk music, circa 1969-70, refined for the millennium with more subtle jolts and a darker sense of the absurdity of life, that makes it sound less than appealing, but it's absolutely captivating.

The Quay Brothers come across Jankowski when he was playing for a Polish theatre group called Teatr Osteogn Dnia. Since then, he has composed for all their films. Inspired by a novella written by Swiss author and wonderer Robert Walser, Institute Bemerska illustrates *Or The Dream People Call Human Life!* as a story of a boarding school for training servants. Jankowski's music cuts to the heart like a surgeon's knife, steels sure-footed through darkness, clatters and roars in ruminacious mania or, in the case of 'Minaret With Hydrocephalus', in which a low-slung trumpet blows its nose at trembling strings, constructs soliloquies that are plain bizarre. Andrey Tarczak's cello, in particular, is searingly beautiful, and the contrast between chorus and double bass on 'Corone Non Infinito' summed my expectations upside-down, never to recover.

Though the soundtrack was composed between 1987 and 1991, a first listen suggests music that could have been created at any time in the past 30 years. Listen again however, and there is too much ease and familiarity in Jankowski's powerfully odd juxtapositions for it to have been born in the awkward ends of terrible hybrids such as poetry and jazz. Third Stream rock at the 90s or ragga rock. This is clean music, from Eastern Europe, steeped in free jazz, folk-theatre music and the more austere branches of classical and ecclesiastical music. Jankowski's unconscious versatility is worlds apart from Ryuichi Sakamoto's transnational hyperflow of musical currents yet both are equally characteristic of the absolute now.

DAVID THOMPSON

Urban Tribe

The Collapse Of Modern Culture
HO WAKIMOTO CD 2LP

Detroit has become so associated with Techno it's sometimes easy to forget that other forms of electronic dance music do occasionally emerge from the city. A collective including Carl Craig, Anthony Dixon, Sherard Ingams' Urban Tribe project uses the more fractured beats of Hop Hop and Jungle as the foundations on which to construct subtle abstract Electronica which ironically has the classic off-kilter quality and air of melancholy currently missing from most Detroit Techno.

Recorded at Carl Craig's griddly styled Electronic Music Laboratory of Aural Sciences, the whole album reeks of technology, both in the track titles ('Lap Top' 'Metabol'), and in the sounds themselves: the hollow drum in 'base beatz' of 'Genome Project' seems to dissolve before your ears, in part of a dissolution process, while the springs, coils, whirs and hisses that scurry across the monotonous tick of 'Micro Machines' are the sounds of nanotechnology in action, subatomic mechanics going about their business.

As with any laboratory environment, the inclusion of external elements can upset the careful balance: the military snare that slice across 'Sophistry' are reminiscent of pre-Consumer Pleasureland while the grubby drum clicks of 'Peacemakers' recall Autechre. Overall though this is a highly insular, almost hermetically sealed world. The Detroit reference becomes as irrelevant as any geographical marker.

Urban Tribe both reflect and betray their name: this group of sonic nomads could emanate from any city, more likely they only exist in their own minds and those of the listeners.

PETER PHINNEY

Chris Watson

Outside The Circle Of Fire
ROACH 10.37 CD

Play a few seconds of nearly any track on *Outside The Circle Of Fire* and it sounds like the freestanding Telexie disc ever. Take the third one against a backdrop of near silence, it alternates a semi-regular bouncing bell click, a little sponging often chirrup and an occasional flurry of rapidfire low-end ruffles. It's got the kind of rhythmic inversion Squarepusher or Aphex Twin would be proud to lay claim to.

But when you look at the title - 'Male Capercaille Display' - you realise that this is in fact, an unplugged a disc as it comes. Watson has recorded 22 breeds of animals and insects in the wild. Bright into attack range by Watson's close-mic recording technique, hearing them is a startling experience.

Watson's last disc, *Stepping Into The Dark*, was all about sound environments and dense

textures, this one zeros in on specific creatures for their abundant timbre and rhythm. What's surprising is that track after track is a killer by musical standards: check out the incredible tones of hawks wading out of the mix. Those two birds in the Costa Rican forest are natural born clevver gurus. What am I doing here? Are those male cockatoos signed to Warp or Sakhō? Watson's gone to some serious lengths to capture this stuff on tape and he's come up with sounds that most humans never get to hear. Endlessly fascinating and often earling, *Circle Of Fire* reveals new directors for man-made music.

DOROTHY WOLKE

Hal Willner

Whoopi Is An Indian
FUSIPIOOT FUSI012 02 LP

It's hard to believe that this is a maverick US producer Hal Willner's first solo LP. Harder still to imagine it coming out on a label like Howie B's Fusifoot, more usually associated with Trip hop. But it was preceded earlier in the year by the low-key release of a 12" under the name of Redboy. A collaboration between Howie B and Robert Roberts, it was a clear indication of Howie's interest in roots-based American music. With Willner, the imperial may well have found a shared love of plundering popular culture for their own musical ends. Whatever the reasons, the results are truly inspired. The best thing to come out on the label since Source's *pelusa* LP.

An object lesson in sonic collage for all those half-baked pretenders who think it's cool to throw together two contrasting Blue Note samples. Willner brings together a collection of sound sources that define 'electric' and conjures Frankenstein-like a besting and twisted form from these willy-nilly diverse body parts. A Barber shop into a fire 'n' brimstone preacher and a Hawaiian, these at share dock space on the first track. And it just gets wilder. Alamo Hellfire sees African chants sparring until counted out by an orchestral version of 'The Star Spangled Banner' which in turn slaps it out with some 'Cocaine' blues before the whole lot are carried out of the ring to the tune of 'Home On The Range'.

What today's best marchants do with samples, Willner does with whole cultures. He's like the sprawler: dark beats and industrial drum 'n' bass rhythms that at least partially anchor the disc. In contemporary disco music, you'll find modern classical music, campy storytelling, Country & Western crooners, US Army drill instruction boogie woogie piano and 21st century Electronica. It's a magnum's nest of sound: an album that should signal the death of lazy beat collage. Finally, it ends with a funeral dirge, a one that stretches a Tom Waits-like bark across time, in the process connecting sci-fi atmospheres and ancient voodoo trailers.

PETER PHINNEY

in brief

avant rock

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

Assembly Line People

Program Subdivision Of Being

TECHNOCORE TRM006 CD

Dirt Nap The Speed Of Sound

MESOCOLO CD

The missing link between punk and Prog — think *Pink Floyd* on uppers — Assembly Line People's *Program* is a dazzling display of speed and technique. *Sack* in overdrive, they crash so much material into 33 minutes, nobody leaves feeling shortchanged. For all their precision, however, the music is still rather like looking at frenzied insects trapped in a jar.

Somewhat perversely, *Dirt Nap* forge a link between opposing tendencies: they balance the measured discipline of postmodern rock with the raw drift of hardcore. In both cases, discipline is the watchword, so I guess they have something in common. They too salt tunes with coarse, distorted vocals, piling additional layers of distortion on "Resin."

Martyn Bates Imagination Feels Like Poison 1 SCALE RSR012 CD

Milksoop Holly Milkweeds

SHIMMERSTIC SHM5994 CD

Ex-Eyekids in Gaza baleafire Bates' new folk music is so heavy on studio arrangements, it comes out fully overcooked. His declamatory vocals, accompanied by the simple strumming of a banjo, are drowned in echo and multi-layered voices. Knowing this work comes straight from the heart doesn't make it any easier to like. *Sincerity* of conception can't compensate for its musical shortcomings.

The Milksoop Holly disc, featuring singer-songwriter Raia Flynn arranged and augmented by Shimmerstic boss Kramer, is altogether more successful. But for all the songs' lyrical flourishes, the project never quite comes to life. They can do hankie-confessional ("Devil's Advocate") and be lyrically opaque ("Hokkien Lament"), but when they try cold weird ("Companion"), it all goes pear-shaped.

Dirty Old Man River The Sudden Movie Screen RSR011 CD

Shiny Brites Los Pollos Entrellas

GODS RECORDS SWT420 CD

The spirit of Nick Cave and The Birthday Party hovers over these albums. Featuring a rhythm section that plays like The Bad Seeds gone swamp rock and the beautiful runed voice of Julian Hals, *Dirty Old Man River* plot a murky course from menacing intimacy to unreleaved tension. Mills' hoarse, expressive vocals make Tom Waits and Mark Lanegan

sound like choirs, but somehow the songs lack the character to get up and walk away from the superficially impressive musical landscape they're embedded in.

Though they work the same muck, Shiny Brites are distinguished by a harsher, simpler sound. Percussive bass powers their lurching rhythms, and a guitars with James Williamson solos alternate with jagged runs with stony barrages of noise. Dame Hammarica's loopy, semi-spoken voxels round out their low slung, shivering art rock. The jazz-mutated guitar licks of "Hey You Romeo" and the intense minimalism of "Don't Shut On Me" take Shiny Brites into ultra-lo-fi, sleeve rock territory. Is that an upmarket shift, or are they summing it? Depends which end of the swump you come from.

Family Of God Atomic Little Thing EP (OUT NOW) OUTLOOK CO

Family Of God Chris Cibis and Adam Peters have often overplayed their eccentricity, but on this new single their unfettered eclecticism yields some good results. The title track is a fairly dispensable bit of acoustic guitar pop, but things pick up with the ethno-electronica of "Satinin." The brainy, loping "Take The Monsters" is inspired jewelry — jostling digi-dub melodrama is nothing if not novel. Just like their subject, they take a stumble with "Electric Bill," an unfunny stab at Bill Clinton left behind by recent events at the White House.

Karda Estra A Whistler In Summertime NOISE KND12 CD

Richard Korda and Isabella Bailey's neoclassical soundtrack mixes loops, samples, and orchestral arrangements. The music would probably sound fine with film images, but as a learning experience it fails to engage. Then again, it's none too clear exactly what kind of film the music suits. When they're not hammering it up with Hammer Horror theatrics, their lush arrangements get horribly close to pompous, symphonic rock.

King Missile III Failure

SHIMMERSTIC SHM5990 CD

Rooney Time On Their Hands

CORPORATE LIFE RECORDS CORP014 CD

Forsaking straight lyrics for a more dense interweaving of rock and spoken word, King Missile III's intentions are clearly satirical. They're just as clearly not very good. I can take umbrage, but John 5 Hals' brunt prose is just ashine. "Failure is not out to fail

you" Failure words you to fuck it to fuck it off. "Up My Ass" is Hall's smug attempt at South Park-style scatological humour.

That narrative song can work is proven by Paul Rooney's fascinating 10-CD collection. He simply describes scenes, often from photographs, without judgment or metaphor. In fact, it is more anti-narrative than story song with the music acting as a frame around their stark centres; yet it is never less than fascinating.

Kreidler Coldness

eff. synapsis

09/10/01 CD

Pram Sleepy Sweet

corona recs ED 1 P

Ostensibly the most modern of post-rock groups, Kreidler's *Coldness* is the retro virus on the vocal mix of "Coldest" opening this single. Its Germanic vocals and pulsating melodic synths immediately recall Krautrock. It might not be the most accurate representation of Kreidler's capabilities, but as electropop it's consensual enough. The rest more readily conforms to type, particularly the instrumental squalls closing the CD version.

For all the supposed postmodern flairs, Pram are more obviously musical. Aruanquians "Sleepy Sweet" sashes a sinfully keyboard melody underneath some light crooning. Once processed through Pram's patented nouveau-retro sound, its "Version" acquires a lovely vintage dub flavour.

Brian Locklin & John French

Ruthaway Mud Train

YANKEE HILL

AIRRON RECORDS PRM01 CD

Landis Yesterday's Tomorrow

Turns Out To Be No Future At All

MIND EXPANDERS/LA RECORDS PE 010540.03

As heirs to Beethoven's connection, Locklin and French make intriguing use of found sounds and field recordings, particularly on "Laguna Gate" which samples and loops a noisy gate hinge to hypnotic effect, and the semi-abstract drama and number of "Anna Of The Five Towns." But to get at them you have to ride out low coffee guitar susches like "Spicy Hot Dog" and "Spaghetti West."

Landis also offer experimental waywardness with more straightforward pieces. Their album begins promisingly with a pair of guitar-based spacecakers before coming back to earth with a whimper. Intermittently interesting instrumental solos relieve the tedium of their unremarkable songs.

Mirza Iron Compass Flux

DARIA

09/08/01 LP

Time Control Time Control

sub Rosa SR013 CD

Although their men deal is still far psychadelia, Mirza have shed their music losses from their guitar-laden last album *Anadromous*. The driving percussion and

melodic sheets of noise are still intact, but they're offset by atmospheric dissonance, abstract soundscapes and a more varied range of guitar styles.

Time Control's Japanese space rock takes off on waves of analogue synth noise and strict motorik drumming. Between the four originals and two remixes, there is not a lot of variety, predictably enough. Trance rhythm monotony is effective in the short term but it wears off over the distance.

The Pastels Illuminati

Remixes

corona recs ED 1 P

These days anyone who stands still long enough qualifies for the full four star remix treatment. Scotch indie perennial The Pastels get theirs from a truly impressive cast, including Cornelius, To Rococo Rot, Mouse On Mars, Jim McInnes, Kevin Shields and Jim O'Rourke. Though they're subtended to such a stony battery of tricky edits and loops, Pastels elements remain surprisingly identifiable through a good two thirds of the cuts. Highlights include Cornelius's dreamlike "Windy Hill," Mouse On Mars' jagged sound collage of "Arctic Plan" and Third Eye Foundation's subterranean "On The Way."

Scalz To You In Alpha

100 MURE

post-1 CD

Former Seefeld members Darren Seymour and Sarah Peacock pass on the socially acceptable torch song option of *Third Eye* and instead plough deep into a murky world of machine-driven grooves. The flow of ideas Industrial beats are disrupted by the odd jolting blast of brutal guitar immolation. "Cat" is like a hybrid of Spacemen 3's "Redulator" and Ticky's snarling of "Black Steel."

Sophia The Infinite Circle

PIRATA

SHC 110002 CD

It would be easy to dismiss Sophia as part of the new meiseableit tendency, when in truth their melancholia runs a whole lot deeper. *The Infinite Circle* is one of those emotionally cathartic records that reads the line between honesty and pathos, courageously risking ridicule as singer Roger Sheppard explores the lived emotions at his core.

Spiritualized Royal Albert Hall

October 1997 Live (RECONSTRUCTION

SEMINOLE CD)

This live recording puts the seal on Jason Pierce's pact with authenticity, symbolised by his privileging of slide guitar over effects pedals. The presence of brass and gospel choir further authenticates the R&B leanings, and a burr-stomach rock gospel reading of "Oh Happy Day" closes the set. Though it's undeniably thinning, you can't help wondering how Pierce gets away with indulging in the kind of rock'n'roll ostentatious others have been roundly pilloried for.

in brief

critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

Mark B & Blade Nobody

Relates/Wire 1 Sat 9.30pm jazz rock
19.01.12

This 12" is that rarest of records: British Hip-hop that actually makes it on the strength of the MC as well as the producer. He rhymes are hardly mind-boggling, indeed they are too literal, but unlike almost of his countrymen, MC Blade manages to compress the Queen's English into Hip-Hop's deceptively strict rhythmic framework. He does give some help from Mark B's fine beat construction on "Nobody Relates": whose groove is based on a single string and keyboard loop that would get anyone's head nodding.

Si Begg/A1 People

B Boy Of Tomorrow (Si Begg) 12" 19.01.12

Yet more Reggae/Bluetech: are not siBeggs from Hydrogen Dubstep? "B Boy Of Tomorrow" is actually the B-boy of yesterday: it sounds like any three song snippet of the Kiss FM circa 1983 when D-Tran, Man Parish and UTFO were all part of the same kraut groove. When the sources are this good, who cares about the lack of originality? "A1 People's" "Strawfield" is no less of a remembrance of things past, but it uses a flavor or two to suggest a fit de seek modernity.

DJ Faust, Shortee & Craze

Fathomless (DJ Faust/Hop Hop) 12"

This hoe-down featuring the South's finest DJ crew can't immediately stink, but then halfway through the Jungle track "Parappa" you realise that the doubletime beats are entirely made up of scratches and you think, "Marque Marque, eat your heart out." In fact it's so impressive that you're willing to forgive the fact that some of this EP is as overbearing and pose-industrially Gothic as a bad ice record. Even though it has every sound ever recorded at its disposal, turntablism is still constrained by its very limited tonal palette.

DJ Soud & Christoph Fringelli

Bodylinch (dj-soud.de/chrissie) 12"

Soud & Nonex Total Deaf (christophfringelli.com/totaldeaf) 7"

As producers D/S are incisive, and forceful: earers DJ Soud and Christoph Fringelli are the real breakbeat extremists. Harder, faster, louder than anything else around, the *Bodylinch* and "Total Deconstruction" embody art as collision and rhythm as punishment. Emerging from the free party scene where pure, visceral noise seems to

be appreciated more than anywhere else these records have moments of leapback whilst that border on Boyd Rice territory but are constructed with a sense of rhythm and an awareness of texture – something like Muzak Akua in an Alto and hot pants. The *Bodylinch* EP makes any pretense of Ed Rush and Optical as hard men seem laughable, while "Total Destruction" sounds like a Sam Peckinpah film breaking out at a regular interval. When the US Army wanted to get Manuel Noriega out of his bunker, this is what they should have played.

Adam F Bradd New Punk

(colours) 12"

The drum n bass record of the year finally gets a full release. Taking its title and MO from the Godfather, "Brand New Punk" is comprised of a well-worn snippet from Rhythm Heavers' "Kiss From SWAT," a mammoth breakdown featuring Spoonie Gee and a blueprint fanfare that collapses into a grinding, unresolved baseline and tight timbombs drums. A clincher for the funk to return to the Jungle, or vice versa.

The Isolationist

Hydrogen (siBeggs) 12"

This collaboration between DJ Vadim, NYC rappers Anti-Pop Consortium and Scratch Pervert A Primeus treat your ears as its punching bag, dark and moody production and some fine karate chop scratching set the scene for the rapelle, almost rhythmic flow of MCs Priest, Bells and Say Said. As clever as the Anti-Pop Consortium are, it's Vadim's ultra minimal production that steals the show. Easy the best thing he's been involved with for a very long time.

Jeep Beat Collective

(jeepbeatcollective.com) 12"

Eschewing the party tricks collected on *Repossessed Wildstyle*, this time the Rul aka Jeep Beat Collective attempts to move into DJ Shadow territory by trying to give breaks and beats an emotional weight. Unfortunately he tends to slip into the Sub-Porridge region by linking the breaks and pieces into an emotive structure rather than letting them do the work for him. For Jimi Hendrix is much better when The Rul isn't trying to be so producerly, instead letting his Techne do the talking.

Jungle Brothers Because I Got It Like That (art street records) 12"

Originally intended for release 10 years ago but shelved until now, the Ultimatum

me of this old school classic features the beat from ELO's "Don't Bring Me Down" below some skat-guitar. Any record that can find the connections between Jeff Lynne, Laurel Aubin and The Jungle Brothers deserves your attention. The new Decay Avenger mix is based around some schlocky soundtrack stuff and is just too busy to succeed although the doubt-free quasi-Jungle section is pretty nifty. The Freestyle's try to pull an Aphex and fail fairly comprehensively. All the modern trickery can't disguise the fact that the original, based on a Stone cold-blue groove is still the best.

Jurassic 5 Concrete Schoolyard

(RMCD061) 12"

The Thermidorian reaction to HighHeel's blotted materialism continues apace with this glorious reminiscence of Old School pleasures like sitting on the stoop talking shit, imitating the Harlem Ghettoites in the schoolyard and cracking up at Good Times and Hong Kong Phooey. "Protected by the covenant of word and beats" Jurassic 5 aren't afraid to sound more like The Furious Five than Puff Daddy's pepe and the piano loop is as unashamedly nostalgic as an episode of *For Better*. The second CD has the bonus of Cut Chemist's brilliant, funny, damn clever "Lesson 6: The Lecture" and the fine new track "Rubber Tyres".

Mike Ladd Blah Blah

(mikeladd.com) 12"

Just as turntablists have taken DJing to its very limits the new wave of Hip-hop-influenced poet-performers have taken MCing just about as far as can go, at least in terms of sheer density. "Blah Blah" and "The Afterburner" are both packed datasets of mumbledness and wordplay for wordplay's sake that are as hard to penetrate and alienating as one of Rob Swift's more specific beat juggling routines. Like fellow poetry slam graduate Saul Williams' recent "12" it is really the music--other rhythms, word and moopy beats that puts this wannabe's record over.

obO 1 Lockin/Far Canal

(obodj.com) 12"

Abandoning his occasionally ley jazz tendencies obO's Albin Ridder has crafted an extremely minimal 7" that somehow manages to sinkly "1-Lockin/Far" has a vaguely Eastern European cloo-weaving as way through synth loops, while "Far Canal" is basically a wob-blown guitar riff that wants to be a Jeff Mills-themed synths pattern.

Rancho Relaxo Allstars

Luv Parade (rancho-relaxo.com) 12"

Abe Duque and his associated band of weirdos return to their country retreat and ride their horses into a Photoshopped sunset. Bearing little relation to the complete shenanigans of the cover art and

accompanying booklet, the music made by Duque and sidekicks Mike Vario, Taylor Deupree, Dennis Schneemann, Jens Tenor, John Selway, Jochen Reuter and Pruzec is quiet, considered Electronica bursting with vivid, tonal tonal colour. Ceaselessly on the wister, meditating this of much Ambient music. Rancho Relaxo Allstars is here to make you feel as quirky as they can without grossing you out. Creepy voices whisper about you in the background, a Spanish speaking shell tries to sell you a poison that will improve your sexual potency, icy shimmering synths a la John Carpenter make you think somebody's stalking you. *Luv At Luv Parade* reminds me of the kids in *The Hot Potato* where, after a tender, two teenagers are talking and moving really slowly to try to break out their loose friend and make him go home. More evil than Husky.

Semiconductor Vs

Disastronaut Music Is Tapping Home Killing (surpriserecords.net) 12"

It's probably no less a puerile response to media overexposure than the output of fellow Brightonians Brownie and Spymine, but this collection of static, 50s sci-fi music, broken beatboxes, misheard words while noise ticks pause button tape edits and creeping machine which, only occasionally tries to remind you how clever it is living up to its desultory title, the LP makes a fine DJ tool for more out-there club spaces.

Titanion Duvanté

Avonites/Alewayways (2000 Black)

(black2000.com) 12"

More impeccable warm Techno from Ohio's Titanion Duvanté. His basslines suggest that like almost every American involved with Techno and House he's a Prince wannabe, but he thankfully keeps any hint of a kinky loverman all ego hidden behind galvanising grooves, gorgeously fluid and vibrant synth colours and the most highly developed funk sensibility of anyone in Techno. See Juan Atkins.

Transient Waves

Born With A Body And Fucked In The Head (at

(atfrecords.com) 12"

Formerly with the very eclectic Data Records in San Francisco, Transient Waves specialize in a kind of organic, Amish groove that lies somewhere between U2 and Tony Iommi's "Born With A Body And Fucked In The Head" transmutes from the kind of funk played by Germans with oozingbowl horns and three inch thick spines to an urban underbelly gunkjam with incomprehensible vocals from a piece on nitrous oxide and back again. The remains by Two Lone Swordsmen and Skye each focus on one half and don't really go anywhere.

in brief

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

Remedios Amaya Mc Vay

Contigo (MHPD5984/CD 72436561164 CD) A rhythmic element helps define the finest flamenco. Remedios Amaya is a singer whose popularity in Spain reflects a degree of reactivation. She has smoothed some of the sharp edges but her tradition is preserved in her visceral singing. Vicente Amigo's guitar accompaniment assumes freedom to cross conventional boundaries but his jazz inflections are tempered with real flamenco fire. Some dilution may have occurred in the course of modernisation but this still moulds in time-honoured fashion.

Yossi Arkinheim/Yair

Dalal/Amir Massarik/Chen Zimbalist Sheebash (Naxos 8.554101)

An Israeli ensemble comprising flute, oud, double bass and percussion. Sheebash celebrates folk traditions of the Middle East filtered through elegant compositions and arrangements. The source materials, ranging geographically from Morocco to Tadzhikistan are handled with evident respect, but the polyrhythms of the group's execution tends to level differences. The performances are undeniably immediate, but the polish tends to dilute the graininess which preserves much of the distinctive character of folk material.

Dade Krama Ancestral Danbou

Sound Music ROM0101 CD

Dade Krama is a pan-African music ensemble whose reputation has been established across Europe through their dynamic concert appearances. It was considered with the album *Ancestral Music Of Africa* and its sequels sustains the momentum through a series of seductive performances. Intricate percussive patterns mesh readily with a range of acoustic instruments (plucked, bowed and bowed) and highly affecting voices. The usual adjectives – vibrant, infectious, dynamic really do apply in this instance.

DZM Project/Madosini Power To The Women

Hil (2006 65104 CD)

This is a mighty recording. Madosini Manjana was born in South Africa's Eastern Cape. She makes and plays simple instruments. Uvea harps and mouthblown whistles, hanging songs and dances them with a voice of fragile yet defiant beauty. Here Doss Phagela and Mandeville Ootong from the group Amapando have collaborated on arrangements, enhancing Madosini's parts with additional percussion, chants and

ululations. Their superb work in the studio produces electrifying results. Hypnotic from start to finish, *Power To The Women* bejays both the most basic means to an end that is simply spellbinding. Greg Hurner's two dub mixes work well enough, but seem superfluous on an album that so perfectly states out its own timbrelic domain. Essential.

Faraflna Nenokiso Intuun (Intuun)

Ten years on, it seems that Faraflna are still best known for their artistically successful collaboration with trumpeter Jon Hassell on *Flesh Of The Sun*. Without the heavyweight interventions of Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois that shaped *Flesh*, the ensemble appears rather less arty, and a lot more fun. Nenokiso was recorded in Swaziland, and features guest musicians Thomy Van Roy, on keyboards and E-bez guitar; and Dominique Mollet on acoustic and electric bass. Faraflna's characteristic instrumentation foregrounds the mambumba-bafon, which lends itself well to sympathetic interplay, with pingpong-like instruments. Kara interludes inject extra buoyancy. Only one of the 13 songs lasts more than four minutes. The result is a warm sound, flickled yet immediate.

Garmarna Gudja Spelemans

KOURA KOURA 013 CD

Triakel Triakel XONCE XOLU 121 CD Storytelling is a strong element of Scandinavian folk music, and there is a distinct narrative dimension to the work of Garmarna and Triakel. Emma Hardelin sings with both Garmarna veers towards the rock end of the folk spectrum occupying roughly the same ground as June Tabor with *The Dyker Bay*. Hardelin sounds sour, electronic effects add an air of menace, while English adverbs disclose signs of trollishness and we're-reverent, hunger and loss.

Her voice sounds much sweeter in the folky context of Triakel, where she is matched with a simple yet highly effective combination of fiddle and harmonium. No longer fronting a boozing band, her singing assumes equal value as an instrument. No transitions here, but the music is considerably more rewarding.

Carmen Gonzalez & Koral Y Esmeralda Andantele (Intuun) INTUUN 0101 CD

The province of Esmeralda lies on the Pacific Coast of Ecuador. Here, the indigenous culture has entered visibly into an amalgam with both African and Hispanic traditions. This CD celebrates that blending. It is also a

showcase for the assertive vocalising of Carmen Gonzalez, fronting the Afro-Latin ensemble the lounge Tracks are interspersed with low definition recordings of local people and their environment, which intriguing in their relative inobtrusiveness accentuate the self-aware theatricality of Koral's music.

Busi Mbiongo Uturcaulu (Hil)

2000 882118 00

Busi Mbiongo is a great singer on anyone's terms, and on Uturcaulu she leaves no doubt who is calling the shots. She has appropriated Mekanda, the music of South Africa's Zulu miners, to create a set of songs that advances celebration of contemporary Zulu culture into wholly new regions. Mekanda has been basically music for male voice and conga. Mbiongo's own impassioned singing incorporates mimicry of macho gruffness and soaring falsetto over a fast web of guitars, bass and drums with occasional conga. In the 1970s she recorded in London with Dusto Pukwana and Julian Bahua. In 1993 she made her first solo album Uturcaulu, produced by Will Howarth, a triumphant affirmation of her mature expressive power.

Djelimoussa Sissoko Mali

KORA KOURA 0101 CD

Khalid Rashid Khalidian, Balabian (CNR 0101) CD Planted in Paris, CNR Planets have adopted a wonderfully straightforward approach in organising this set of releases – the ingredients are a place of origin, an indigenous instrument, and a magnificent musician. Impeccable recording quality completes the package. Djelimoussa Sissoko can have few peers among Hall's younger kora players. The nine pieces on his new CD are uniformly dazzling workings of traditional material. A beguiling set for beginners, and an invaluable addition for devotees of the African harp-lute.

The balafon may not have the instantaneously accessible sound of the kora, this Kurdish oboe is more of an acquired taste. But the enthusiastic response granted recent recordings of Davan Gasparyan playing the Armenian duduk, has prepared the way, and Khalid Rashid's balafon offers a rewarding first step. It's basically the same instrument, requiring formidable skills, including circular breathing techniques, to realise its potential. Rashid is a musical exponent, whether rendering a melancholic solo or responding in kind to driving percussive accompaniment.

Tama Walo Keepers Of The Talking Drums

velutuz nuzi yu 1000 CD

Tama Walo is a Senegalese percussion troupe based in Dakar. Its members belong to the Walo Walo people ('walo' is the name of their talking drum). The producers claim

that this recording is the first publicly available documentation of this traditional dance music. The instrument has been heard in contexts furnished by popular West African singers such as Youssou N'Dour and Baaba Maal, but here it takes centre stage. The Tama Walo drummers belong to a hereditary caste of griots, so in a real sense the sound of their astonishing rhythms forms a point of direct contact with a remote past.

Trio Petrikatt Adams source

xout19 CD

The nyckelharpa, a keyed fiddle with a bright metallic sound is clearly a favoured instrument among the young musicians making up a new wave in Scandinavian folk music. Trio Petrikatt includes a nyckelharpa played by John Hedin and Magnus Svartson, to whom Anna Wylydh's cello proves the perfect complement. The trio's polkas sound uncannily close to Guy Klucewicz's accordion excursions elsewhere, the two share something of the elegance of Renaissance consort music, while some of their instrumental flourishes would win over Kronos fans. Overall, this is far too enticing a recording to be consigned to the murky netherworld of folk arcana.

Various Artists Göte

D Ivoire/Masquer Das We (Cntra) L CHANT DU POUVOIR CDR 741 039 CD

These high quality field recordings were made by Hugo Zempf who has also contributed informative ethnomusicological notes. Using voices and relatively simple instruments, the We weave fascinating polyphony music. There is a keen use of the hook technique, single tones rapidly alternated by distinct voices. The same technique can also be heard in 14th century French church music, and in terms of the basis of Louis Andriessen's *Mimesis* classic *Hofkes*. Listeners familiar with the Chant Du Monde series will know that this one forms part of a serious archive, while showing appropriate respect for the surviving practices of an ancient West African people. It's unsettling in the best sense, to be able to eavesdrop on these powerful sounds. Check out the weird kazoo and sit-drum dialogue performed by members of the secret society *kwa*.

Väsen Varidena Väsen source

KOURA KOURA CD

Further evidence of the energy surge currently galvanising the Nordic folk scene, Väsen is a rollicking quartet which should win instant approval from hardcore followers of The Albion Band. Don't be misled by the cover picture, in which the boys resemble some weird mutation of Leibniz. The imaginatively conceived instrumental folk-rock, performed expertly on guitar, percussive violin and the ubiquitous nyckelharpa.

in brief jazz

Reviewed by Chris Blackford

Billy Bang *Outline No 12* (CIMP) CD

Billy Bang's restored *Outline No 12* (1983) features an 11-piece free jazz line-up, owing talent and experience. The brief is to bridge the gap between avant-garde chamber music and improv. The strong section includes Frank Lowe, the late Charles Tyler and David Murray, plus there's a veteran free percussionist, Sunny Murray and bassist Walter Moore. Butch Morris applies improv conviction techniques to chords devised by Bang, whose violin dominates the opening of "Seeing Together," playing with the kind of bang vigor that Beriot and Reina were wont to call for. For its time, this was bold, adventurous work, and deserves another hearing.

Braxton/Gillmor Duo *4*

Compositions (Trademark) 1998
16 CD

Elon Dean *Jazz Us* (Jazzwerk)

RMR103 CD

Conversations about Anthony Braxton inevitably turn to the size of his discography. Every year the deluge of new Braxton recordings continues, and with his own recently established Braxton House label the prospect of Braxton product saturation becomes all the more alarming. At least Leo Records can't be accused of promoting him at the expense of equally deserving yet under-recorded contemporary composers' improvisations (see their excellent Leo Lab label). *14 Compositions* (Trademark) 1996 is a charming triptych of an album alongside his monumental projects; yet a satisfactory reply to those who still perceive him as a cold intellectual. He and Stewart Gelner (reeds, French horn) jump right into the likes of Louis Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael (Duke Ellington and Fats Waller) having fun finding new sonorities and harmonies in old tunes.

British altoist Elton Dean also has a sizeable discography, if still some way short of Braxtonesque proportions. *Jazz Us* (1971) his debut album as a bandleader, was recorded a few months before Fifth was lost, with Soft Machine. It features most of that LP's personnel (minus Hugh Hopper and John Marshall), plus the fine cornet of Marc Chang alongside Neville Whitehead, Nick Evans, Jeff Green and, on the funny fusion of "Fun Cat," Louis Moholo. Long out of print, it's a timely reminder of how potent and independent-minded a force early British free jazz was, even though it received a fraction of the press lavished upon the American scene. 25 minutes of previously unreleased material adds to this musical's value.

Andrea Centazzo/Alvin Curran/Evan Parker *Real*

Time Two NEA TONEIC/CD/NONESUCH SERIES #102 CD

Real (Time Two (Rome, 1977) was reissued in 1996, serving to remind us that the strongest duo had its surging moments, especially during the high pitch microtonal exchanges between Curran's electronics and Parker's soprano sax. Curran and Parker impress in much the same way as before on *Reel Time Two*, a previously unreleased 44-minute Centazzo's rumbling drums and noisy cymbalwork sometimes seem superfluous, at worst canceling out Curran's delicate electronics. Similarly, when Parker's agitated soprano calms down perhaps not often enough, Curran's rhythmic inventiveness, oscillations and soaring tones comes into play and the music's vision begins to fascinate.

EasSide Percussion *ESP* (KaiNt)

AM9773 CD

Between them James Ragiese, Christine Baird and Michael Evans have a wealth of experience in US avant-garde groups, such as John Zorn's *CobrA*, God Is My Co-Pilot, Marc Ribot's *Steel*, The Harry Partin Ensemble and Bang On A Can All-Stars. Here they supplement a huge array of Eastern and Western percussion with electronic devices (including a theremin with synthesizer and analogue delay) and found objects like levitated chandeliers, candle holder, oven rack, and payphone can return cup. With all this stuff at their disposal, disc pline and control is called for, and EasSide demonstrate this to great effect in 20 short improvisations which subtly and patiently explore non-diatonic atmospheres, as opposed to powerplay thrashics.

Martin Klapper & Roger Turner *Recent Circuits* ACT! 10 CD

Klapper's interest in experimental music began in the junglands of Prague. In 1984 he emigrated to Copenhagen, from where he's participated in many collaborations on the European improv scene. Jamie Muir once recommended "Approach the rubtush with a total respect for its nature as rubber" — maintaining that nature into the performing dimension." And Klapper does exactly that, retaining the essential low-grade crappiness of his amplified odds and sods. But if anyone can extract poignancy from a loose floorboard or a squeaky toy, Klapper's the man. His manipulation of bass is also inspired. British percussionist Roger Turner is another

seasoned master of junk aesthetics. Together they create a world of indescribable textural resources where indefinite pitch rules supreme. And the secret of its seductive ugly beauty lies in their deft, unexpected timing and close listening. Wondrous

René Lussier & Pierre Tanguy *La Vie Qui Bat/Chevre*

AMBANCES/MAGNITUDE/CD/NONESUCH

René Lussier & Pierre Tanguy *La Vie Qui*

Bat/Chevre/AMBANCES/MAGNITUDE

M9001 CD

Pierre Tanguy & Tom Walsh

Mid-Tapant AMBANCES/MAGNITUDE-

AM933 CD

Three recordings from stalwarts of the Quebec New Music scene. By the looks on the faces of guitarist René Lussier and percussionist Pierre Tanguy, *Chevre*, the first of their *La Vie Qui Bat* recordings, is meant to be a lightened affair with an interest in fables. Sadly none of this warmth is conveyed in the playing, which lacks both variety and the spark of invention. Lussier's acoustic and electric guitars doggedly pursue a choppy, fragmentary course alleviated with an occasional lyrical glimmer, while an understated Tanguy pitter-patters on drums and scratches cymbals to no great consequence.

The same pair fares a lot better on *Chevre* when the Brian Rix troupe's picke pictured on the sleeve sets the tone for the album. And in peace it's funny, particularly songs like "La Vie Qui Bat" and "Salade Du Chef"; even though I can't understand much French. Unlike Hans Reisch, Lussier's a poet of the saxophone but his use of the instrument does provide some memorable, joyful outbursts before Tanguy's scattered small percussion and objects.

Tanguy is in less jokey mood for *Mid-Tapant*, his duo with trombonist and sampler Tom Walsh, both apply an impressive light touch to their electric collages. "Un Petit Détour" has a delightful, shifting, childlike quality whereas "Friends Overdrive" comes close to Jon Hassell's world music, and "Est-Ce Que Marie Peut Veoir Jouer" carefully juxtaposes Oriental colours with Western orchestral density and jazz rhythms.

Trio BraamDeJodeDeVatchev/

Bentje Braam Monk Material/
Playin' 72nd Second Coolbook

M9003 M9002 CD

L'Orkester Des Pas Perdus

Masseo, Dejode, Marcon AMBANCES/
MAGNITUDE M9003 CD

The rhythmic compositions of Thelonious Monk continue to be a source of motivic inspiration for a wide variety of contemporary improvisers. From Steve Lucy to David Hoss. In 1990 Dutch pianist Michel Braam was commissioned to

interpret Monk themes for the Jazz Marathon Festival. Wilbert De Joode (double bass) and Michael Vatcher (drums) joined him. They invested their selection with an exhilarating, bright and breezy energy and crisp technical virtuosity — the latter principally coming from Braam's dramatic leaps across the keys and rocko right-hand flourishes — but not much of the oblique, boldic heart and soul of Monk. "Cross Cross" leaves Braam's tendency to cross the line between natural exuberance and showboating off. Here Linne Traizatto-influenced compositions on *Playin' The Second Coolbook* have a doxos good-time feel aided by Ian Ballamy and Martin France whose work with Bill Jenkins holds them in good stead for these little manœuvres.

Canadian L'Orkester Des Pas Perdus deserve their name: they are a punchy swigger of a sound that could fuel you into thinking larger forces are at work. Their specialty is groove-based contemporary jazz. Interestingly, a sousaphone supplies the bassline oasis beneath the well drilled saxes and brass. However, they do possess a lurking sense of mass intent, which surfaces in small measure here though I suspect it's more evident in their live performances.

William Carlos Williams

Collection Plateau/STRETCHING 54000322 CD

Henryk Muntz & Don Marvel

Ode One & Otto WILL@HIBAL.COM

Possibly monstrous sounds to launch five pieces (plus bonus) William Carlos Williams's second album. *Collection Plateau*: The thunderous, bass boom density chasmow guitars and flamethrower horns of "Kenny Deliver's" and "Surface Tension" will certainly get you to the living room wall if your speakers can handle it. They blow a decent tune too like *Letter Boxes*' "Zero," even if it gets held up by a few mediocre solos along the way. In fact, some decent heads of their own would have given much needed shape to their rudimentary jam session approach to this free jazz/rock equation.

Henry Kurtz has been a purveyor of free jazz and improvisation for more than 20 years. The first disc, *One* is Kurtz alone on tenor sax sounding for the most part like Evan Parker (notching from the middle of the instrument while simultaneously sending out squally overtones from the top end), but minus Parker's multiphony, complexity and artful sense of compositional development. For all Kurtz's technical know-how there just isn't sufficient variety of imagination to command attention for a full CD. On disc two, *One & One* Don Marvel processes and mixes Kurtz's tenor, Chinese mallets and Neslestyle bassoon flute. Given the otherworldly potential of the instrumentation and process the multi-layered results are less than intoxicating.

in brief outer limits

Reviewed by David Keenan

Nuno Canavarro Flux Outta

MOSAIC CD 12P
The skinny on this obscure, atmospheric electroacoustic/Ambient coolcassette, reconstituted from a 200-copy LP released on a small Portuguese independent in 1988 is that a copy found its way to Cologne in 1991 and gave impetus to the group of young musicians who would go on to become *Pause On Mars*, Pluramon, The A-Musk (and ex). For sure, the muggy Mediterranean heat that makes Heratossa's brittle electronics swell and crack, and the sense of serious play you get from Lethaps are here in protofactual abundance but we shouldn't allow the inventors to overshadow Canavarro's freshly revealed genius. Aurial arcylos render an intricate world of Gallic bandoneon, Galic harps, music boxes and cut up chid voices alongside spectral electronic melodies, toy organs, Plego-like scratch-scratches and sequin-bright textures that ripple across each other like fan scales. Credit to Jim O'Rourke's Musica libel for bringing the fauna of Lethaps Teased intact back to life. (Rob Young)

Emanuele Dimas De Melo & Pimenta Dufesa Della Natura

CD 12P
Tear Ceremony Film Decay

SUPERIOR 51.0000 2D
Dufesa Della Natura was commissioned for a video tribute to the late performance artist and environmental activist Joseph Beuys. Emanuel Dimas has previously collaborated with John Cage, and the music here have been performed by the likes of David Tudor and Takehisa Kosugi. Created entirely on computer and synthesizer, it conjures a dungeon-dark space, its stillness punctured by stony rumbles and ghost voices.

Tear Ceremony like the single note synth melodies of Krautrockers Harmonia and submerge them in smoke and heavy pompage. Madly douring.

Disc 2xCD vinyl: COMMUNICATIONS VCT 34 2xCD

Disc Gaggin CD4 vinyl: COMMUNICATIONS VCT 41 2CD
First part of a series of drive-by shootings from American West Coast label cousins of Oggi Hardline. Ignore the cover, the future is now packaging, complete with obligatory Manga graphics, and follow the noise. One is VCT's most interesting proposition. An unlovely often 1.55AKid+406 and Hermos, they relieve the claustrophobic tension with finite loads of static hum. Apparently there's a collaboration with KK Null in the pipeline

on this evidence, it'll be quite a mindfuck. My copy of Gaggin CD4 comes complete with a fully baked copy of Billy Joel's half baked Innocent Man CD. Guilty as charged.

Judy Dunaway Emergency

MOSCOW CD 12P
LOSD The Man Who Made Radio VAMPIRANT NO NUMBER CO
If the prospect of a solo performance on balloons is scarcely more attractive a proposition than *Compositions For Fingernails On Blackboard*, then steer clear of *Emergency Music*. In small doses it's pretty ferocious. At times it sounds like Charles Gayle blowing over houses or Ornette Coleman on amorphamines fiddling at the Town Hall. "Unpredictable, uncontrollable and volatile" - balloons may be magic, programs lay the sleeve.

The LSD disc is a live Dutch VPRID Radio recording of a tribute to the guy who thought us radio. Floating Ambient soundscapes coalesce in fascinating. At this point I made my excuses and tuned into *Freming Today*.

Tetsuo Furudate & Kasper T Toepitz

Neon Green (its devotees do nothing in black and white)

Puka Puka Brianz Dubbing MIA
KICK NUMBER CO
Anyone familiar with either Furudate's jungled stagfests of Sampled orchestras and Prog rock or French lowrider Toepitz's numberless dub impressions would have to be centrally inclined to even notice their duo CD's shrimprap. Well, call me Napoleon but their cavernous guitar/horn neverbeats on Neon Green could just possibly be taking a holiday in Neil Young's *Am-Meet*.

Puka Puka Brans spot on *Fluffy Flashback*. 4 give advance warning of their scumbled punk primer. Their set includes between Swell Maps, pub beat and Silicon Temps arch late 70s synth revisions of bubblegum. A killer.

Illusion Of Safety Bad Karma

Wormholes Seven Point Plan To Destroy Astrology (or economics no Number CO)

The Wormholes are a thrash-punk group from Dublin who occasionally hold hardcore masses in honour of Sun Ra. Richard Thomas is a Welsh DP/production mafus currently resident in London. Hermed a clutch of Wormholes tunes earlier this year, Thomas carried them off to his laboratory sliced and subjected them to a violent electrocution. The rodents assiduously eat Thomas' nicely constructed with added stopgap peaks, wailing trumper, spank sonorities and shortwave shtter, and if all those High Lamas/Pastels/Mogwai remixes seemed far

From Austria Andi Haller presents a collection of soundtrack work. His claims on Europe's free jazz heritage are quickly undone by his lame playing in a cheaply beat driven, near mood.

Kid-606 Unamerican Activity

VAMPIRANT VCT 42

Kid-606 Don't Sweat The Techniques VAMPIRANT VCT 42 CO
LSR/E/Kid-606 Split Compact Disc VAMPIRANT VCT 42 CO
With Kid-606's kind of sonic brutality it's never clear whether the noise is steadily escalating or just static. The Kid chums *Mozartian* static over neurotagging weedy hats that explode one step behind the action with such regularity, either he's gervously cackhanded, or he must think he's so far ahead, bestow, nonetheless else can keep up. Don't Sweat The Techniques features some really shrill strident assault, possibly sourced by rubbing hats on a balloon. LSR on the other hand compress early Public Enemy and post-555 hardcore into split-second sample drops.

Rapoon The Fire Of The

Borderlands RELEASE RPR 014 CO

Apollo/Musling auzé Dark Thoughts DOA KDR009-11 CD
Rapoon & Robin Stoney once of zowefrance who displays keyboards and four track tape recorder to unreel his slow, circular loop reader a fluttering rhythmic pulse. "Crescendo" relays a neck loop of a carousel with occasional choral intonations. Not sure how many Rapoon CDs it takes to expand a mind but this one will do as well as any for an afternoon of virtual sensory deprivation.

Dark Thoughts is a collaboration between Eastbow bore Madlunga and Martin Lee-Simpson who confesses to producing Peplage. With his usual dual flair for things dark and meteoromatic, "Gauze's" gloominess follows out across an insurmountable barren wasteland before a brief flurry of harsh electronics usher in the dub bit. Gong, nowhere, intermittently.

Richard Thomas & The Wormholes Seven Point Plan To Destroy Astrology (or economics no Number CO)

The Wormholes are a thrash-punk group from Dublin who occasionally hold hardcore masses in honour of Sun Ra. Richard Thomas is a Welsh DP/production mafus currently resident in London. Hermed a clutch of Wormholes tunes earlier this year, Thomas carried them off to his laboratory sliced and subjected them to a violent electrocution. The rodents assiduously eat Thomas' nicely constructed with added stopgap peaks, wailing trumper, spank sonorities and shortwave shtter, and if all those High Lamas/Pastels/Mogwai remixes seemed far

too abstract/s�� tune into this to hear how the worms can really put the boot in. (Rob Young)

Tomorrowland Sequence Of The Negative Space Changes

VAMPIRANT VCT 42

James Plotkin/Mark Spybey

A Bergdorf At Blair VAMPIRANT VCT 42

Tomorrowland are the sound of Flying Saucer Attack in a toyshop. Sweet, swirling touchdown organ tones and alemoen meshes of blunted guitar create blanket breezes of soft, earthy It electronics. *Somnium* is the deepest sound of ice cream vans heard as a hazy phased wazoo: the benign buzz it leaves in your head is beautifully nostalgic.

Plotkin on guitar and Spybey on toys and voices take things further skyward following in the jet trails of Ash Ra Tempel's Joni Inn or Nut's Absolut Heaven.

Vajra Saravaka

Fushitsusha Withdrawn: This Sabie Zettschule Eri Devord

VCT 060 CO

PSF knock up their 100th release with a phenomenal entry from resident subcrew Vajra Saravaka. Ken Makem and Toshi Inukai have turned Vara through countless permutations of voice acoustic/electric guitars and drums to keep the cloud howl setting on the music. Here they throw it off to the wind and pile on more punk sump per minute than any of their previous bops. To hear Makem and Inukai's possessed vocal duets is an absolute joy.

Hanno is also astoundingly vocal form throughout. *Windbreaker* - recorded live last year at Canada's Victoriales festival. The real diamond here is an unprecedented (for Hanno) retake of a piece from Fushitsusha's PSF album *Penonique*. The build slows down and losse, and when the riff locks in with the end credits it's truly earthshaking. Aside from his seriously extended solo stringed guitar, Hanno also sports his way through long mournful vocal flights over near silence. If you're still holding your bens on Fushitsusha this is the one. Glorious.

Various Artists

In The Wrong

VAMPIRANT VCT 42 CO

TV Pow Away Team

RECORDS CO
This anti-music group summit brings together countless unknowns - at least to me - panoply on *Cave* (Bad) guitar and electronics. Long stretches could be an extended tribute to Royal True's majestic *Two Initiates Everywhere*. Almost sounds like an invocation of the spirit of Los Angeles Free Music Society truly inspired.

The college boys of TV Pow arm their OATs and dismissed CDs at Japan in an attempt to shore up their end of the Japanese-American Nose Treaty. Sell one-in to the East

the compiler

New compilations reviewed, rated and reviled

Unprisingly, the influence of Carlos Santana looms large over **Checo Poveri Latin Rock In The USA 1968-1976** (Soul Jazz SJR39, £14.99). While Latin rock had probably been around since Luis Guerra's pachanga anthems were riling cues during LA's zoot suit riots of the 1940s, it didn't become a recognisable no outsiders at least entity until Santana stole the show at Woodstock.

Combining with the Hispanic community's growing socio-political consciousness as a result of Cesar Chavez's unionising of migrant farm workers, Latin rock's pure American amalgam of Cuban rhythms, funk riffs, Miraculous Hymns After Myths and rock licks was a brief and rare flourishing of pride from America's most disenfranchised underclass. Beginning with Santana's cover of Willie Bobo's "Evil Ways" and El Chicano's version of "Viva Trade" in 1970, Latin rock was also a Top 40 commercial force in the States.

Most of the tracks here take off from the Santana blueprint, screaming keyboards shuffling jazz funk rhythms and keening, high-pitched guitar solos. Santana appears on the track that wowed us at Yasgur's farm — the Sunlame solo-Dave-Cronin-on-an-antennae-tipped sound of "Soul's Advice" — while Carlos's brother Jorge appears with Malo on two tracks which display more influence from both the band and Yes. The rest stars though, are the groups with the least pedigree. From Lima, Peru, Black Sugar's "Too Late" sounds like Plong! — Santana jamming with "Move On Up" era Curtis Mayfield. On "Chacua" meanwhile, Hamis' The Antiques sound like a garage punk version of Santana complete with extraneous Space Age keyboard sounds.

Once again, the Soul Jazz label has rescued a sub-gem from the dustbin of history and proved that rescuing doesn't have to be an exercise in creative bankruptcy or corporate greed.

Talking of dustbins, some may be tempted to consign **RRR-Solo** (RRR RRR500, £24.99) to one for the hell of it; it is probably the most difficult LP to listen to ever. Composed of 500 looted grooves cobbled together by Paul Brekus, it's a masterpiece of mastering (by Paul Brekus!) and a nightmare to try to play in anything resembling a normal way: you have to physically pick up the needle and move it to every 1.8 second long cut, depending on how you want to look at it (infinitely long) track. Not quite as consonant as 1992's "RRR-100," 7" single, which was a smaller version of the same idea, it still

got a bunch of relatively recognisable names — Sons Youth, Ry Cooder, Bruce Gubert, Alan Lomax — contributing micro-tracks alongside lesser-known figures. The contributors essentially adopt one of four approaches: 1. B second composers or sound-basis reg ("The moon is the direct port of the human body") pieces that subdivide and repeat within that time (best: the word "Wood" repeated three times), blurs of noise that have no particular beginning or end, or fragmented excerpts that function the way a stuck groove ordinarily would. And if you don't like one vision of eternity, there are others right next to it.

Equally as strange, but eminently more approachable, is **Sounds Of North American Frogs** (Smithsonian Folkways SPDC45060 CD), which shows the songs of 57 species of frogs and toads over 92 tracks. The collection, subtitled "The Biological Significance Of Voice In Frogs," is a rescue of a 1958 site from Folkways Science Series, one of the 5000 or so albums that label founder Moses Asch kept in print simultaneously during his life. Let anyone think that this is a damer form of the sonic wallpaper found in New Age stores 40 days after a Howleen Werewolf, it should be noted that the album is a rigorously assembled scientific monograph, with brief descriptions of songs followed by spoken annotation by the album's compiler, herpetologist Charles M. Bogert, of the who and whatcoloroles of a specific breed of frog.

As for the vocalists who star on this collection, the wondrous array of their names alone is sufficient to entice. Pe Frog (Quart Mexican Treetops, Great Basin Spacefold, the Bonell Toad). Some were recorded in arachnid chambers, most others in their natural habitats, with painstaking details concerning time of day and location of the actual song offered in the booklet. What do they sound like? On the whole, the mixtures of swamp and tree tent collected here suggest everything from uncooperative automobile engines to the full range of thoraco-based instruments devised by human pervertoids.

The sleeve-note to this new edition reminds us that frog and toad populations are in decline throughout the world. With their glistening, permeable skins, amphibians are more vulnerable to what Henry Beston has termed the "fearful travel" of life on the planet. They are the canaries in our coalmine. *Reviewed by Peter Shipton, Douglas Walk and Richard Henderson*

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Master includes David 5 Ware, Willem Parker, Joe Morris, Red, Other Dimensions In Music, Bill Dickey

Brief history Started building foundation of fab in January 1997, the first two releases (by David 5 Ware and Willem Parker & The Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra) came out in September of that year. Releases by Joe Morris Trio, Bill Dickey and Other Dimensions in Music followed.

Statement of intent To document major group works of the modern jazz musical masters working primarily out of (but not limited to) New York City. We are especially interested in those players who are truly furthering the rich tradition of (and) creative music. The production work done, to then spend as much time and energy as possible to make these landmark efforts be heard by the many during the same time period within which they were created, to this moment.

Other activities Managing David 5 Ware now that he is signed to Columbia. Along with principal organisers, Patricia and Willem Parker, I have been curating the Vision Festival for the past two years. Also, Ione A is a double CD compilation of live recordings from last year's festival.

Future plans New releases this autumn by Joe Morris and Willem Parker. Order To Survive, Scheduled for next spring. Other Dimensions in Music Special Quartet with Matthew Shipp. Currently planning US tour for In Order To Survive, Joe Morris Quartet and Other Dimensions In Music. Also planning first US West Coast appearances of David 5 Ware. Quartet early next year, and Ware will be appearing in London on 6 February 1999.

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New music books: read, raved about, roughed up



Fusion heads: Chick Corea (above), John McLaughlin (right), Larry Coryell (far right)

Jazz Rock: A History

By Stuart Nicholson

CARNEGIE P/B \$11.95

A lean study of an all-too-blotted genre, Stuart Nicholson cites the reason for the critical bête that has been heaped on jazz rock as a simple one: its association with fusion, which was inherently false and ultimately damaging to its development. Jazz rock, according to Nicholson, is a genuine creative impulse, one which emerged partly as a consequence of the cultural and political tumult that characterised America, and particularly black America, on the cusp of the 70s. In the process, it created a hybrid that did not so much extend the directions of either genre as wear off on a completely tangential journey. Fusion, on the other hand, was nothing more than a marketing device, dreamt up by commercial radio stations and record companies in the US to satisfy ad revenue demographics. Ironically, the book is accompanied by a CD release, titled *The Best Birth Of Fusion Ever!*

Nicholson places the origins of jazz rock

led them to jazz rock. The golden period (1967-74) is well represented by all the obvious figures — Miles Davis, John McLaughlin, Tony Williams Weather Report, Herbie Hancock. The conclusions are just as familiar: Lifetime and the first three Mahavishnu Orchestra LPs stand at the apex of jazz rock's achievements, while the excesses of *Reunited* To *Forever A Romantic* signalised the beginning of the end. Inevitably, *Blitzkrieg Brew* is held up as a pivotal moment, the record that defined a genre but for Nicholson, this has less to do with the quality of the music and more with Miles Davis' position as a catalyst and figurehead of the new music. It's a shame, however, that Nicholson hasn't got more to say on the impact which the music of Sly Stone and James Brown had on Davis, Tony Williams and Billy Cobham. And although he's given more coverage than both Stone and Brown, Jimi Hendrix surely merits a chapter of his own. His music is clearly worthy of discussion on its own terms, not merely in relation to the development of Miles Davis.

In many ways, Nicholson's charting of jazz rock's decline makes more interesting reading than its glory days. Clearly he's a fan and, as such, there's a certain rose-coloured reverence towards the greats that obscures objectivity. But his astute and honest enough to acknowledge that, with the possible exception of McLaughlin, none of his heroes managed to carry the jazz rock torch into the future. By the late 70s, the music had surrendered itself up to the commercial opportunities offered by fusion, which were fully exploited by such labels as CTI and even Blue Note. In contrast, Nicholson expresses real delight in discovering genuine alternatives to Kenny G, such as Black Jazz Records.

As so often happened in times of jazz

firmly at the feet of the rock fraternity, going grousing such as Cream and Soft Machine as forerunners. More interesting, however, are the pages he devotes to the forgotten heroes who came at the new music from the jazz side: Jon Corr's Nuckles, Gary Burton's Dusler and particularly the star-crossed guitarist Larry Coryell. The music produced by these musicians was a viable hybrid, not merely work in one genre with hints of the other (cf. Givens). Motivated by possibly not pay-off, these are the people who actually drew up the jazz rock blueprint. Mostly they never got to capitalise on it.

From here on in, Nicholson structures the narrative around a number of key figures, showing in clear and easily recognisable detail how their personal and artistic development



crisis, Miles Davis again came to the rescue. His 80s albums served to re-ignite public interest in a form of pop-influenced jazz rock motivated by creative imperatives rather than purely commercial considerations. This avenue proved something of a dead end, however, and the more interesting contemporary developments have come from alternative sources. Nicholson cleverly argues that the trend is part of jazz rock's underground continuum, which takes in Frank Zappa, Ornette Coleman's hemi-melodies, and the likes of Ronald Shannon Jackson and Steve Coleman whose 80s groups injected curmudgeonly doses of 1980s flavour into jazz's increasingly rare atmosphere. He also accounts for the cut and paste global trading of Bill Laswell and, finally, New York's downtown scene. Somewhat inexplicably, John Zorn — arguably the most important jazz musician in the world today — merits less than a page in Nicholson's account. These are the people who have kept jazz rock alive, even if, in the process, they have mutated it into forms unrecognisable to those who invented it.

PETER MCINTYRE

Lunar Notes: Zoot Horn Rollo's Captain Beefheart Experience

By Bill Harkleroad with Billy James
SAT PUBLISHING \$11.95

When John Peel declared on British television that for him, Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band's *Trouz Most Replics* was the greatest rock album ever, his judgment was a smack in the face for rock culture as currently constituted. For a reigning consensus that equates rock with sales figures, rather than transformation of consciousness, where Phil Collins is more honoured than Boosie Collins, Captain Beefheart provides its nemesis. For puritan critics, he is our trump card and our nosiest dissident. His electrifying music points beyond the narrow scope of rock journalism — what is its "survior" sentimentality about celebrities and their sedious drug and marital problems — to hardcore 20th century art and its rejection by society.

It's not just rock culture that founders on Beefheart, the diluted avant-garde circulated in official artspaces also looks makestif, self-conscious, and overtly niched in comparison. Beefheart and The Magic Band attempted to make surrealism and idea a mass phenomenon, something lived rather than regarded, a revolution signalling the end of a culture based on commodity exchange and infrastructural separation. Next to *Trouz Most Replics* the art postures of the Enos and Bowens and Hinsos pale into insignificance. And it is not just a style culture experience, recuperable, something to grow out of. It's there, objectively, in the way the music is put together.

Rock in the 60s was part of the worldwide



Zoot Horn Rollo

discovery of black American blues and R&B. To perpetrate his collision of modern art and black music, pianist-composer Don Van Vliet required musicians. Bill Harkleroad — renamed Zoot Horn Rollo — was his guitar player, and this is his story, as told to Billy James. Harkleroad is an unassuming, likeable conversationalist. He declares that he is, and therefore lack the populist impetus and universal aspiration of the classic Magic Band productions. The 80s music isn't chart bound, it knows it doesn't really matter. Even *Unconditionally Guaranteed*, roundly dismissed as a sell-out by diehard critics, contains meditations on viscous pop form that are more interesting than the *Trouz Most* reveals of the 80s. In the mid-'70s, something broke in Beefheart, and the world, and it's useless pretending that all the elements were still in place. Harkleroad was aboard for all the truly indispensable albums.

As Harkleroad explains it, Beefheart's methodology recalls James Brown's non-musician drummers playing to realize beats they would never have dreamt up on their own. The Magic Band all lived in the same house, dominated by Beefheart's poetry recitals and philosophical lectures like Sun Ra with his Arkestra. Beefheart's experiments with non-linear acoustics suggested a mutation of consciousness only a reorganized social basis could recognize as non-pathological. Naturally as with all rock

music that gets beyond Velvettes-style four-square monotony (what Beefheart called rock's "old momma heartbeat") drugs were taboo.

Harkleroad points out one aspect that is essential. Beefheart was applying ideas from the high avant garde to rock. Therefore any serious approach to Beefheart needs to break from the stranglehold of rock mundanity ... tours, recording dates, discographies ... and deal with the proposals about vision and perception made by Wyndham Lewis, Jackson Pollock, and Willem De Kooning. These painters whose understanding of the relation of the seeing eyeball to the world has been marginalized by a mass media dependent on the 19th century invention of the photograph, are the foundation of all that is "weird" in Beefheart. If avant garde aesthetics are pooh-poohed as irrelevant, Beefheart indeed becomes the freak that he complained Frank Zappa made of him when marketing *Trouz Most Replics*.

One piece of absurd speculative interpretation that gains confirmation here is the connection Waterfield-based Zappologist Kirby Rees made between Beefheart and Einstein (she maintained that Beefheart's poems on Zappa's *Bongo Fury* were examples of post-relativity perception indicated by his wearing socksless feet — a trademark of Einstein's — on the cover). Harkleroad actually reports that Beefheart "copied a look" off Einstein after seeing a photo of him wearing a fedora-type hat, a long coat and holding a cane/pole.

Today Harkleroad is happily married,

teaches guitar and works in a record store.

Now an orthopedic Stateside music historian to Pat Metheny and Michael Brecker. Only occasionally, when some "puppeteer-later" guitar pupil questions his testicular right to strum the pick, does he lurch out to stand on the wooden footbridge to the left of *Aeneas Jeremy Sennett*, a spectral, beavipale zombie more far out looking than any rock guitar hero before or since. Though these memoirs don't challenge what you could have guessed from the records, Beefheart was a bully, he made his groups do strange things! Zoot Horn Rollo's directness and honesty is refreshing, an excellent volume to peruse while replaying his unforgettable glass-finger guitar part to *Moonlight On Vermont*.

BEN WATSON

Have Gun Will Travel: The Spectacular Rise And Violent Fall Of Death Row Records

By Robert Bo
QUARTER PINT \$12

I remember 1988-90 as a golden age for rap. The culmination of Public Enemy's

management of ferocity and complexity, the marriage of African roots by The Jungle Brothers and A Tribe Called Quest, the Hallucino-Hop of De La Soul's first LP, and the turntubbed P-funk of Digital Underground's Sex Pockets. But the record that dominated the era was one of the bleakest and most base — NWA's Straight Outta Compton.

On Compton, the BDP boom-beats and sample-blunts laid down by former Electro producer Dr Dre were coupled with the raw technique of lead rapper Ice Cube. Technically Cube might never have got close to the almost classical breath control of Rakim; or the authority of Chuck D, but no other rapper ever sounded so enraged with the world.

Concerned with neither political analysis nor looking back to the motherland, the chasm between NWA and the music press was best illustrated when one UK journalist asked them how they felt about being described as the "black Sex Pistols". "Who the fuck are The Sex Pistols?" countered NWA. Cube neatly summed up their nihilism on the track that christened a genre, "Gangsta, Gangsta": "Do I look like a muthafuckin' role model? To a kid lookin' up to me life ain't nuttin' but ditches and money?"

Compton opened with a single ominous statement: "You one now about to witness the strength of street knowledge." Rappers were also about to witness Compton's earning power, and naturally they wanted to muscle in on the territory.

Suge Knight, a college football star turned bouncer, lured Dre away from NWA to form Death Row Records. With a roster including Tupac Shakur and Snoop Doggy Dogg, the label had a turnover of \$325 million within four years. To get the stars he wanted, Knight's methods were brutally effective. He backed his business acumen with muscle, solving personnel problems and difficult manager negotiations with severe beatings.

Have Gun is an apposite and lucid account of Knight's career, with every punchup lovingly recounted in bone-cracking detail. The supporting characters are no less colourful: Knight's Mafia-connected attorney David Kenner; his even more hands-on associates such as Lupo Dogg and The Violator; Rotties; and the obnoxious Tupac, who masked his insecurities by playing up his gangster status, until someone took him at his word and put a bullet in him.

So why might be that Knight comes out of the story better than the weasly white music execs and predatory lawyers making their rich pickings around the edges of the story? Indeed, some of his alleged misdeeds might have endeared him to the jury — like the time he dangled Vanilla Ice from a hotel balcony, effectively ending the milksoop rapper's music career. And nobody could say Suge was afraid of getting his hands dirty.

The downside of author Ron Ross' muckraking style is that it is sloppily written and repetitious. Also, he has next to nothing to say about Death Row's music. The closest he



the Brattis: Dr. Dre, Timbaland, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Suge Knight and Tupac Shakur

gets to analyse is through quoting other critics' opposing views of the records, so as not to incriminate himself with anything so contentious as his own opinion. One moment he re-told that Dre's *The Chronic* was "a throwback to a soulless period in Black culture" and a step back from Compton's next. It's described as a "contemporary masterpiece". So which is it? If I'd argue that Death Row paved the way for the R&B karaoke of Puffy Combs and his execrable Bad Boy stable, Not the kind of achievement I'd want on my record.

Ross' discussion of Death Row's impact on

white middle America leaves us none the wiser as to how it happened. Despite gangsta rappers' catchall defiance that they were merely "representing reality" they were mostly selling it to white audiences with no experience of this particular reality: vicious entertainment rather than social education. As a *Guardian* review of an Ice T single put it: "Buy this and shit yourself at someone else's misery".

Public Enemy's Chuck D, a critic of the Gangsta genre, once said: "Gangsta rap is an illusion — a gangster can commit a crime, and make someone else pay for it. I don't believe a

black person in America can be a gangster." Platinum records aren't bulletproof, as Tupac Shakur learned to his cost. Nevertheless, Suge Knight was on a nine-year stretch for probation violations, and a number of "forsome Federal law enforcement agencies and working up a RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations) case against Death Row, deploying tactics normally reserved for cracking Mafia front organisations." Maybe black Americans can become gangsters, but only if they can stand the excess heat.

PAUL SMALLWOOD

Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings

By Peter Pettinger

TAKE AWAY PRESS/HB 5.95/9.95

This is the first biography of the massively influential jazz pianist Bill Evans — in fact the first book about him of any description, though he died aged 51 in 1980. Evans's introverted personality and understated style meant that he was always something of a musician's musician. But he directly influenced many of today's most important pianists — Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and their successors — and indirectly through his approach to harmony, almost all the others, and not just jazz. Only uncompromising avant-gardes like Cecil Taylor were immune, and they were his most powerful critics, mistaking his approach for an effete jazz updating of Duke Ellington and Revel.

Evans is most famous for his brief tenure with Miles Davis which produced the groundbreaking *Kind Of Blue*, where he shared an equal role with the leader. The story is that the modal jazz that Evans — with Davis and Coltrane — pioneered turned out to be resoundingly lyrical for his needs. It was McCoy Tyner who picked up on Evans's developments, simplifying them and exerting an influence that seemed almost equal to his though it hasn't proved so enduring.

One of the great artists of the improvised line, Evans's trio on the legendary Village Vanguard recordings from 1961, with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian, displayed a kind of interactive empathy and freedom new to the piano trio format. The pianist's miraculous re-harmonizations transformed saccharine show tunes like "My Foolish Heart" and "My Romance" into art songs — to borrow Peter Pettinger's rather classical perspective. His excellent biography reassesses Evans's role as an artless musical thinker responsible for some revolutionary developments — not just modal jazz, but also the consummate multitasking of Conversations With Myself and later albums, and the collaborations with George Russell such as *Time In Space* Age.

"How My Heart Sings" was a song by Evans's favourite composer, Earl Zindars. It makes an apt subtitle for this biography. Pettinger's key musical thesis is that Evans used the "singing" approach of the classical piano technique in which he was trained to create an understated but powerful, emotional expression unprecedented in jazz. Pettinger is parsimonious on how this was achieved. Evans said his work "must have that wonderful feeling of singing" — appealing to the paradoxical classical technique of extracting a singing tone from what is essentially a percussive instrument. Pettinger explains how Evans twisted the sound by arm weight from the depth of the keys, not the surface. "The note song... The sound is alive and breathing, and is heard, but just as decibels at a certain pitch, but as a manifestation of an artistic spirit. He

possessed that priceless attribute, the ability to communicate feeling through sound."

Pettinger is one of a growing band of classical practitioners who are devotees of Evans. The Kronos Quartet have performed arrangements of Evans, and pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet released a tribute album of Evans transcriptions. Of course this kind of approach raises poignant dilemmas, and Pettinger's classical bias forms a questionable subplot. The classical repertoire explored by Evans as a student at Southern Methodist College, Louisiana gets far fewer discussion than the jazz pianists who were equally influential. Those who didn't exhibit a "singing tone" — that is almost all of them in jazz before Evans — are little discussed. The implication seems to be that Duke Ellington, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk lacked an essential vehicle

hear on this planet or anywhere else.

As with Charlie Parker and Art Pepper, Evans's was a jazz life thoroughly shaped by drug dependence. So was the music. I'm sure the brittle, frantic up-tempo of the last two decades is a lot to Evans's "cognitive period". He was mostly on heroin or cocaine, and

Pettinger is clear on the squander that resides alongside the beauty. He is also not afraid to discuss the reverse racism that Evans suffered from. He certainly added to the pressures on this sensitive musician instantly during his tenure with Miles Davis. It is a heart-rending, tragic story — one of his friends called it "the longest suicide in history". Reading the book brings it into close focus and for those who love Evans's music, it will be almost unbearably poignant.

ANDY HAMILTON



of expression. Revealingly, Pettinger chooses Lee Konitz for playing too sharp and trades the dozen of jazz recording engineers Rudy Van Gelder.

But that's my only substantial criticism of what is a marvellous book. Pettinger is always stimulating, give little consideration to his subject's achievement. His book is an exhaustively researched labour of love. It is a continuous biography and the musical argument is developed along the way. Perhaps a summary chapter on Evans's style would have been useful, however. Pettinger gives little consideration to Evans's critics. A more objective assessment of his rhythmic conception — his relatively weak point — would have been useful. I have some idea of what those critics are getting at because I used to be one, stupidly despising Evans as a "cocktail pianist". That was a long time ago. Now, I confess, I think he produced some of the most hauntingly beautiful music you're likely to

The New York Dolls: Too Much Too Soon

By Nina Antonia

ORION PRESS PAPER £9.99

Of course the title is ironic. The New York Dolls never had nothing, and yet they gave even less back than the little they gave out. They were just another bunch of rock'n'roll dolt-trackers from the boroughs, who mistake their proximity to Manhattan as an outsider chance of the big time. With a tad too little talent to play straight, they hit on the novelty factor of going out in drag, five preening queens from the borough of Queens, mostly who swallowed their immigrant macho pride when they discovered the pulsing power of boys in dresses.

Of course, I'm being too hard. Sorry, but Nina Antonia's hoary and hapless remembrance of The Dolls' rock'n'roll outlaw schtick, authenticated by the CDs of their guitarist Johnny Thunders and their first



drummer Billy Murcia, invites a harsh corrective. Lemely written in a pseudo-hip angst, composed of one part Kenneth Anger's seductive bawdiness and seven parts gothic elegy, the little distance she finds from the subjects soon dissipates in her affectionate zombie act, with which she indulges their lapses, cooing these girls hopped up on Jimmy boozing on his girlfriend again. Yet if not for Nina, who would record this sorry story?

Well, Nick Kent for one. His account of The Dolls' woes and virtues, in his collection *Dork Horse*, is more evocative of New York City's early 70s doldrums following the demise of The Velvet Underground, which The Dolls took advantage of. He is also more incisive about the enduring appeal of a speedbath rock'n'roll group with a Ronnee Spectre fixation, who were too pop for Metal, too fast for hard rock, and too early for punk.

In addition, they were too marvellous for the NYC queen scene flapping around Warhol's Factory, and they were too dragged out glam to be glam. Boy, they were real misfits, whether however you looked at them. But mainly because their take on trash trashed their NYC bourgeois roots, they managed to establish a cultish fondness for their lower-to-middle-class taste, occasionally thinning songs, spilling gassy rags and self-sabotage. The best of them are collected on their debut album *New York Dolls*. Their success, such as it was, was their undoing. More concerts and money meant bitter and harder drags. Soon vocalists David Johansen and Johnny Thunders were pulling in different directions. Songs for their second LP were slow in coming. Their bad reputation ran ahead of them, making it difficult for them to play outside New York. Malcolm McLaren became their manager just in time to pick up the tune of the loser, which he crosswired with Situationism, dressing the group in red leather and hammer and sickle imagery and created his version of punk rock.

Antonia has little to add to Ken's estate, leaving appraisal other than a catalogue of mishaps and misdemeanours.

MARK KURT

multimedia

Dean Roberts witnesses

Flying under the banner InfoWar, Ars Electronica 98 held its sleepy host town Linz hostage inside a virtual city and subjected it to a six day bombardment of noise and images. Numerous venues were commandeered for its performances, installations and symposiums, all of them working at the interface of media theory, information technology and war. Of course, no InfoWar would be complete without veteran media theorist Paul Virilio. Pure War time and other guests included 'Art iUSampling' provocateurs responsible for the cheeky Deconstructing (Beck CD) and war correspondent George J Steer. Sure, the combatants talked a good fight, but the best thing about wars fought in the virtual realm is that they leave no scars. At least not on the surface.

The festival opened with a big bang made by Scratch's Global Hooters, an elaborate gamelan-like percussion work performed on instruments designed by the group's leader, Philip Dadson. Constructed from cheap industrial materials, they were as detailed in design as the music played on them. Years in the making, Global Hooters layered the music to video and computer generated images engaged in a call and response routine with each other. The visuals were provided by Franklin Media artist Michael Söhl's Supreme Parties project. Global Hooters perpetrated as successfully a marriage of acoustic music, image and technology as one could hope to witness.

Advertised as 'a new media performance which provocatively and comically evokes

contemporary forms of creative presentation in the interplay of traditional artistic elements and interactive computer graphics', Global Hooters certainly fulfilled its own brief!

However, it was hardly addressing the festival's more pressing issues. Ars Electronica 98 was out to promote artists whose principal weapon in the information war is political collage, montage as a running dialectic that finally resolves itself in the mind of the viewer. And if all else fails, you can always blind viewers with science. The five night performance of FA Huber's Supercollider project dealt with the concept of particles in collision. The perimeters were set by an audio software program which fragmented, accelerated and collided sound fragments played live by Stomach, Kräuter & Dorfmüster, Tocca and others. Huber's Supercollider organized these sources inside a democratic structure that permitted human subsonics to do battle with electroacoustic fragments and Techno beat endurance. His examination of the interplay of musacans playing live, pre-recorded materials, and real-time sound processing contrasted favourably with the remade approach of Staalplaat's Sound Of Music event, which named the data footloose of Negoland - the underrated Barbed and People Like Us into an abstract music tree for all.

Over two evenings, The Sound Of Music's Plunderphonics absurdism was a very thin veneer over cringe-inducing clichés.

Negoland confirmed the belief that American art can be so softly obvious. Their Nerve countyn Tom Sherman and Bernhard Lotring had already planted seeds of doubt with their Nerve Theory performance earlier in the week. Sherman intoned his monologue on neurons and delusion caused by information overload over 'foung footage', which gave good art mileage to those crusty old standbys — TV evangelists and CNN broadcasts. It was like industurf culture never happened.

project Asia's odyssey to sound pioneer Nikola Tesla took the info war out of the museum and into the streets. Well, OK, onto the river. Broadcasting from a boat going down the Danube, the shifting setting was certainly spectacular, what with the rippling reflections of the city lights playing across the water while the valley filled with the explosive throb of a low speaker system powered by Rhythmix's Nato, Bytone, Komet and Abribit. Their noises and images were produced from signals picked up from the atmosphere via a satellite receiver. These noise transmissions were subsequently sequenced into minimalist pulses surging through massive

art lose the InfoWar at Ars Electronica 98



Paul Virilio became into InfoWar. Left: Scratch's Global Hooters

spectrum blocks of sound. Even allowing for the sound dispersal of the outdoor setting their sonics pummeled the eardrum and reverberated through the entire body.

Though it was undeniably impressive as a sound assault, its visual satellite conception was somewhat undermined when the supposed randomness of its visual material, satellitabounced from who knows where, turned out to be pre-recorded on video cassettes. For a work purportedly dealing with the plundering of information technologies, the use of pre-recorded materials implied a lack of faith in the random principle essential to the shattering of the models thought control! And again is there anything left to be said through catalogues of surveillance footage, CNN and religious broadcasts? The InfoWar was proving to be more an aesthetic susceptible over ownership of clichéd materials than a serious engagement with the political issues surrounding the control and flow of information. The most satisfying events were those that concentrated on sheer spectacle. Pan Sonic's performance trapped an audience on a train ride around Europe's largest

savannahs for a good hour of electronic fun. The steaming industrial panorama of molten steel and billowing smoke contrasted strongly with Pan Sonic's pent down electronics with which they transformed the sound of raw electricity into a mesmerizing motors pulse.

If the point of Ars Electronica was to stage the heroic spectacle of media arts, scrabbling at the lock of digital technology, it too often ended up exposing art's impotence in the face of the super forces of its targeted military-industrial-information-technology-entertainment complex. As ever, the all-powerful 'They', whoever 'They' may be, were cast as the villains of the piece.

In too many instances, the media subversives perpetrated by Ars Electronica participants were as didactic and as inhibiting of free thought as the broadcast media they were parodying. Once you got over the woe factor of the technology on display, most projects collapsed because they were conceptually built on an edifice of info war clichés. Hologram media elements are all very well, but you need something stronger to hold them together than virtual masking tape ...



GO TO:



Plunderphonics/ Oswaldian Space

www.interlog.com/~jEvacav/plunderphonics.html

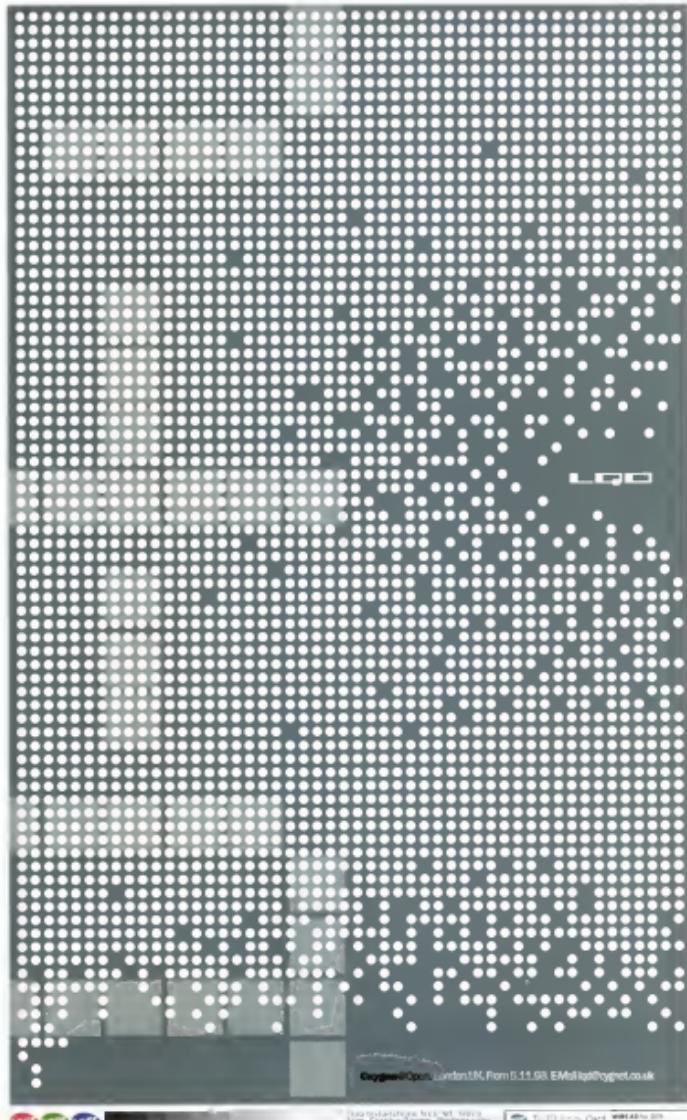
Clicking on the individual letters of the word 'plunderphonics' takes you to this website's sub-areas, dedicated to John Oswald's annotated discographies, a timeline of plunderphona, a lengthy interview with Oswald by American writer Norman Igner, numerous technical explications by the artist himself of his own working practice, and meditations on the politics of electroacoustics. The only question unanswered is what Oswald has been up to in the last 12 months. Oswald's magisterial paper on the fundamental issues at stake in the whole sampling/recycling/copyright reproduction debate, 'Audio Piracy As A Compositional Phenomenon', is reproduced in full, and there are many soundbytes in streaming audio to be plundered. For a broader Net-based overview of recycled culture in its multifarious forms, visit www.detritus.net.

British Music Information Centre

www.bmrc.co.uk/

Not quite as broad based as it sounds, British Music only applies to modern classical composers, in this instance. The new online presence of the London-based BMIC contains a database of 30,000 scores and 15,000 recordings which can be searched through via a multi-option menu so if you've heard a piece that's say for electronics and chamber ensemble, and you know the composer is female but can't remember the name, you can toggle through these permutations. Separate directories arranged by composer and performance/ensemble lead to contact information for music publishers and organisations, and there's a regularly updated live concert listing. But there is a slightly unfinished feel to certain sections — a list of recordings omits the info you really need to know, such as the relevant record labels.

RON YOUNG



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Labradford's First Annual Festival Of Drifting

UK, London South Bank Centre & St John's Church

The opening night of the Festival Of Drifting is outside and overpriced. Apparently, novelist Ian Sinclair and normal hosts Labradford could be the last artists to perform amplified out here on the roof of London's Queen Elizabeth Hall so the main enjoyment of the event comes from relishing the view across to the north bank of the Thames, where you can take in the entire three-mile sweep of the capital's power base, from the Houses of Parliament on the left, through the Inner Temple of Law to the NatWest Tower. Otherwise, this is essentially an expensive book reading on open air, accompanied by Paul Smith's travel videos and topped off with a typically lugubrious set from Labradford. Ian Sinclair's chiseled prose, like that of WG Sebald, actually finds space to rove within England's narrowways beneath the pavement the carpet of history. Following a meditation on death, he invokes his allergy-addled friend, Michael Moorcock, who promptly puts in an unscheduled appearance – making that disappearance, as he remains seated in a minute mound for the duration of his reading. Labradford's appeal escapes me: there's that dumb noise, dense as a truck, and music more concerned with stasis than movement, however lumbering. They work best out here, where their music can blow, half heard up into the night sky, a tremolo shimmer to match the constellations reflected in the black Thames, and the hipping ragged to the summit of a half-finished apartment block, twitching like someone about to jump. On stage in the QEH the next night, the lowering mass of their guitar and Moog abstractions lies like an inert black lagoon, stagnating while the stream flows on elsewhere.

This second night is the week's most diverse Pan Sonic, joined by Bruce Gilbert, assassinates the place with the addition of caustic effluent. They nose into their noise steadily, accumulating intensities until it's warming out in thick, rich layers. Gilbert pokes whistles and howlers into the crotches until the whole construct is thrumming like an outdoor fire. Surprisingly, there are few volcans in the audience. Perhaps they're soaking up the buzz in readiness for Lubodzio Ennada's Ambient harp from Harpa! Cecilia Chelli, performing Eno's compositions, looks like she'd rather be somewhere else, and croaks and plucks for longer than necessary through the mottled Stereo. Someone's it's more fun if you imagine the instrument is playing her.

The Durutti Column have always been a fantastic idea whose time never seems to come, but Vini Reilly looks utterly unfazed by the fact as he kneels on the floor coddling

Labradford on the roof of the Queen Elizabeth Hall

his guitar. The Durutti Column play in public so rarely nowadays they come across as freakish, gawking adolescents at Junior's party. But Reilly's mob genuinely lives up to the rubric of Drift. Longtime Columnist Bruce Mitchell, grizzled as a lemming, looks large on a huge drum kit. "We don't do it very often, but we can show 'em how it's done" is what he his Animal Tails and cheesy grin impart to the proceedings. Reilly responds with equal enthusiasm but none of the goading. Happy Mondays-like, a combat-thrashed harmonic player wanders on and offstage like a missed cue at a Nativity play, prigging photographing the rest of the group. Reilly's scuttling guitar chimes just into the venue's dead air. The effect is akin to watching sheets of snow, as soon as you try to train your eyes on one flake, the entire blizzard appears to slow down. There are grotis from some of the best Durutti albums — drum solos, operatic samples — before hammered Rhodes syncopations summoned by Reilly's absurdly long fingers take us past the midnightr hour.

ROB YOUNG

To the Situationists, the dense (drift) was an experiment in the destruction of maps and codes, a chance to wander the city, crisscrossing the normal pathways and following contours of ambience. This was psychogeography, an attempt to re-map the world in favour of psychic, not geometrical, associations.

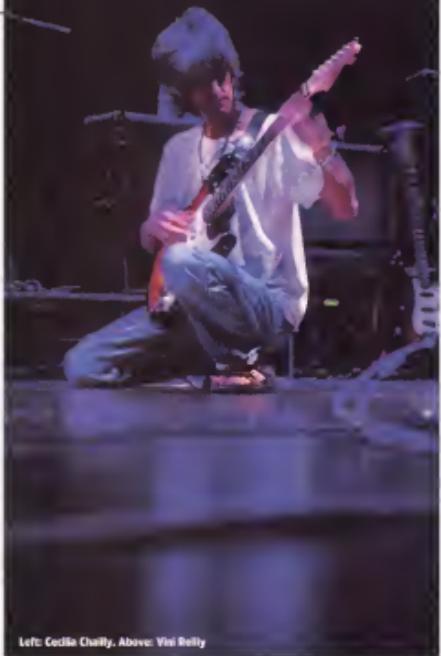
Not all the performers in this festival are inclined to see drifting as a form of radicalism, but two clearly do: even in the 70s heyday, Charlemagne Palestine was never reducible to the Minimalist label with which he was often stuck. His piano pieces were cathartic rituals, stuck at the keys of his Boswellsian until spectral harmonies pierced the tumultuous abyss of sound, as strings snapped and fingers bled. He combined the visionary angle�ness of La Monte Young with the self-sacrificial macabre of performance artists such as Chris Burden, and would sing lengthily drones while flinging himself against walls or hunting round a gallery like a dervish.

St John's Church, near Waterloo, is an almost cubic space, an empty white and gold box. At the start of Palestine's concert, a single soft chord is droneing away on the church organ, positioned in the gallery behind the audience. Palestine is patient, gradually adding extra notes, subtracting one or two, shifting the mass of drone-tones through deceptively slow cycles. On the first few cycles, numbing releases of sonic energy seemed to trickle out of the organ and it spars one or two minutes before I realise it's only the sound of trains passing nearby. It's a golden sound, a lustrous, glowing complex of harmonics which never slips into celestial drier. As slowly as she allows it to grow, Palestine lets the sound collapse back into that single held chord.

So suddenly his voice is with us, walking down the aisle, singing pure tones and resonant

overtones like a Tibetan monk or Jewish cantor (the earliest musical memories are of singing in a synagogue choir). It's gorgeously simple, more so as he audibly searches for tones that ring out in sympathy with the spatial drone. Picking one of his iconic stuffed toys from his piano, Blind Monk, he leans to its gentle little, a spirit guide imparting incomprehensible musical mysteries.

Palestine's piano pieces are legendary for their cataclysmic energy, their ability to tease out glorious harmonic effects from the simplest repeated two note rhythm. Setting at the piano tonight, the same technique is applied to more subtle ends. The first notes are barely perceptible ripples amid the continuing organ drone, but as these enter they fatten, then flood. Hammering away, Palestine gradually weaves a magical harmonic car's cradle out of the simplest combination of notes. From the piano, it's over to a tape machine, and add-on-recorded electronic shimmer to the sound. These somnolent



Left: Celia Chitty, Above: Vini Reilly



fragments are perhaps the most emotively beautiful moment so far, and as they rise, Charlemagne marches off to repeatedly circumnavigate the audience. Noisey elements fade up on the tape — field recordings of crowds, music, noise — and he starts to dance a little, then run.

Eventually, he silences the tape, leaving only the constant golden organ chord behind; now as much a part of the space as the gold paint on the walls. He returns upstairs to the organ, and before long, the sound is growing superdense again. When he drops out a whole

wave of tones to leave only the lowest notes it's gloriously gorgeous, and at its most thunderously volcanic. I notice that a florilegium near the front of a church is nearly out. It's a good time to stop, and he does.

For Palestine, the exploration of resonant space through sustained sound (as close to *drift* as he gets) is an opportunity to directly connect spirit and body, by re-emphasising the physicality of hearing. Tony Conrad, performing at the Queen Beatrix Hall a few nights later, also searches for more than just another opportunity to drift off.

Tonight sees Conrad alone with his violin, and even by the standards of this notorious progenitor of Minimalism, this performance is a stripped-down affair. The stage is entirely shrouded behind a white gauze curtain, and only a single lightbulb at the back illuminates Conrad, casting an enormous shadow onto the wall. The double image is an apt metaphor for Conrad's work: his escalating Minimalist drone casts a shadow too — the glinting overtones beyond the abrasive violin notes. It's also a conscious nod to his peculiar musical history: his most famous music, created in collaboration with John Cage, La Monte Young, and others during the 60s, is known only by virtue of its reputation and influence, the recordings remaining unavailable.

Tonight's performance at first foregrounds Conrad's raw, uncompromising violin technique. Scrapping antagonistic drones out of its strings, you get the feeling that if he'd cut it in half and make it scream if only he could. It is utterly impossible, like having a nerve trapped under a grinder, a piercing sound that refuses to be ignored. After a while, the oscillator and Conrad's intended playing technique take over, and the drone, although still painful, becomes considerably more complex. At times, it's surprisingly evocative, perhaps even romantic, despite the shrillness. It is no way

on location

abstract music like Palestrina. Conrad has a very direct physical relationship with his sound, and his music has a compelling brilliance that belies its unforgiving fiction. It's difficult to think straight under the assault, and even less easy to give it undivided attention throughout, but Conrad's psychogeography of sound remains a potent antidote to conventional musical maps.

ERIK DUGGE

On the festival's closing night, Bill Nelson admitted he knocked up the backing tracks for what he described as a performance of "instrumental karaoke" fairly quickly. Some of the music was colourful and vivacious — particularly "Jupiter Blend", which incorporated hifi recordings — but just as often it sounded like high-class noodling for guitar and occasional marimba. The highlight was a resourceful guitar improvisation using delays but otherwise Nelson seemed loath to push himself. He could not along like this indefinitely.

The house lights dimmed and the stage lights went up revealing a seated John Martyn reading a magazine. "Oh sorry," he apologised in his strange Glasgow/Cockney tone, "just drifting." It was lucky enough to see Martyn perform an amazing solo set in 1979 and then unlucky enough to catch him a few years back playing hundredfold sub-Hip-Hop grooves with a motley bunch of fusion-loz musicians. I breathed a sigh of relief when he kicked off tonight's performance in some style with a loose, swinging version of "Lookin' On", accompanied by a supply line of drums. Chapman stick ("that funny looking thing"), as Martyn described it (it looks like keyboards).

Time has weathered Martyn's intoxicated star, honing it into an instrument that erupts in great bluesy streaks of emotion. Despite the gross rolling along on a rhythmic loco, his

create an intriguing landscape for the mind to wander through, but by the third piece Letterford drifted toward the dull and soporific. Well dynamics have never been their strong point. The highlight was a lengthy all-electronic track with Bruce Gilbert spilling his sonic lathe turnings into the group's smoother textures. It passed to a close some 30 minutes later leaving me with the feeling they'd promised to take me somewhere, only to abandon me half way.

Muse For Airports has rightly achieved Ambient classic status, with some irony, considering Eno's claim that it was music to be ignored as much as listened to. But it sounds at home in a big concert hall. Like many of Eno's Ambient pieces, it carries a strong sense of melodic line and structure, and even a whiff of romanticism. It would be hard to imagine anyone scoring more purely festival Ambient music like, say, Thomas Koner's *Nunstai Gongorum* for chamber ensemble, but it's possible to transpose Eno's piece because he makes space work within his spartan lines. Bang. On A Carr's version orchestrates detail within that space and adds colour to the lines, while respecting the form. The strongest section in both its original and chamber versions is the Morton Feldman-style "11". Here Michael Gordon's subtle scoring for cello, double bass, piano sampler and tuned percussion added even a musical focus to dazzling effect.

MIKE BARNES

Dumb Type: (OR) UK: London Barbican Theatre

The Japanese art collective Dumb Type for whom Ryūji Noda now acts as the sonic wing, are a rare experience on these shores. Press information has this down as the group's UK debut, but various projects have made their way over since *<OR>Requie Litterae* at the ICA in 1988. Founded in 1984 by Tey Furukoshi and gathering together various friends from the City University of Arts in Kyoto — studying theatre, dance, music, architecture and computer programming — they have pursued an ongoing investigation of the body/surface with new media and technologies. With titles such as *prf. S/N* and now *(OR)* (suggested interpretations include zero nodes) and operations room i, it's not hard to see the connection with Isolde's solo work *<OR>*, the interest in binary absolutes and the sed/nologues through which those absolutes arise and their impact on the series. Furukoshi died of AIDS in 1995, but a note written just before his death outlined a new untitled project that would explore the border of life and death and how technology is used to define it. The outline drew on experiences of his mother's death from Cancer, his brother's from a traffic accident, and his lover's from AIDS. How much the source can control this border. How much our mind can control this border." The note ends adding "This is the border which all the humans have to confront some day."

Lubradore were a disappointment. For a start their set sounded the same as the ones they'd performed earlier in the festival. Their big open tunny Marconi-like guitars and basses taking around a few keyboard chords

astonishingly made "Solid Air" transcendental. "Well dished Latte," he quipped afterwards. It was great to hear Martyn in such good voice and how his newer material held its own next to his classics. But as the set became progressively more four-square, I longed for more of the loose-limbed approach with which Martyn opened the show.

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ILLUSTRATION: JONATHAN MCKEE

stage is a white operations room backed by a semi-circular screen with a single figure standing to one side. A transparent scientifically controlled space, somewhere between an intensive care unit and the Tzitzis-Tract. The solitary confinement unit in which Baader-Münch members were imprisoned — the walls and furniture are painted white, and the light is always on.

Ryoji Ikeda's bursts of sound veer off the scale, sharp and instantaneous, annihilating time rather than marking it. Over a period it could shatter someone's identity. Faced with such absolute impressions, the senses get sick, take shelter. Figures appear on stage in the light bursts, standing corpse-like in white patient's gowns, or scurrying naked in fear. The light and the tones flash more quickly. Bodies don't hectically, gimped in the strobe, pulsate by a pseudo-Techno pulse. They run, skip and tumble dead, patient becomes nurse, light flicks to dark, figures collapse in fear, crawl or roll across the floor. The control of sound and light is absolute, but its symptom is confusion.

The ensuing tableau work through the basic ideas in more narrative form: a trio of male bodies laid out on trundles with wife figures performing their solitary masses, trying to move, stifle or aggravate the corpses back into life. Other sequences play on the body's part in a kitch consumer pantomime — sex, high school babes hopping across stage like automata, manically rubbing their breasts in time to a machine loop. And snatches of deconstruction seem just frame a picture-postcard world of figures in states stamped in matching deckchairs. The technology of reason turns out to be too much for the mind, which either suffuses submissively, or seeks a holiday away from the pains of the emergency room. In a lengthy central sequence, a solitary figure stands motionless centre-back stage, while footage shot travelling down a series of motioncams is projected over her body and the stage. A restless scope, drive, shone onto and over a passive, corpse-like subject.

The stage is ostensibly the illuminated space open to all regret. But with *[O]R* the audience is also the target of a surgery of light and sound. The Barbican crowd seemed a strange audience to undergo such a need of sensory perception — most of them cosy dressed theatregoers, rather than refugees from Upstairs at the Garage. But only a venue solidly bastioned with cushioned seats and wooden shock absorbers could support such uncompromising sounds. Ikeda's music has so well into this scheme precisely because it can be blasted out at such extreme levels and still retain its purity. We'd like to think we can meet the contours of our own power without the muffling of metaphor, to gauge our existence as a precise material fact. But inevitably we take flight or seek a lucid escape into vacancy — awareness tumultuously contracting and dilating like a frog's heart in a laboratory tank as it approaches its own limits.

MATT HYTHE

The Köln Concerts 2

Germany Cologne Stadtgarten

The spotlight reveals a scraggy chain-smoking man seated at a laptop. He's reading the news, which leads with an item about an air disaster involving a plane on which it dawned on him, his family were travelling. He becomes progressively distraught as he continues through the other stories of the day — Clinton/Lewinsky/Koch and other issues tangential to all our lives. Punctuated by Fred Van Hove's piano and the Streicherquartett (string quartet), our newsreader, Detmar Muez, makes a foray into the audience, mounts his lectern and scatters his cue sheets in a crescendo of despair. A masterfully performed tragedy even for the sizeable minority of us in the audience for whom Germany is not the mother tongue.

This constituted the second of three sets on the first evening of Tony Oxley's 60th birthday celebration at the Stadtgarten, Cologne, an ideal venue in terms of size, ambience and organisation.

The first set was by The Original Joseph Holbrooke Trio: Detmar Muez and Gavin Bryars, who last played together in the year England won the World Cup. There was an attempt to reunite the trio in California a couple of years ago. However, the logistics failed on that occasion. So here they were, together again after 32 years, which is equivalent to the period separating Louis Armstrong's Hot Five recordings and Ornette Coleman's *Tomorrow Is The Question*.

The essence of the trio was there from Oxley's opening pair of acerbic chords, through Bryars's ever attentive basslines to Oxley's orchestration of time itself. There was no sense of nostalgia here, more the feel of three men resuming a conversation they had begun some time ago, while mindful that their subject matter back then had been widely discussed in many languages since, and that this was a restatement through minds enriched with subsequent, disparate experiences. Bryars and Oxley have worked together in several situations over those years, notably with their own quartet, including Pat Thomas and Matt Ward. Bryars and Bryans have also collaborated occasionally, remember "The Squirrel And The Rascally Rackett Bridge"? The three of them have variously worked with Braxton, Zorn, Cage, Cardew, Rollins, Bill Evans, Cecil Taylor.

For the closing set of the first night the trio was augmented by Matt Ward on electronics and special guest Bill Dixon. This was an interesting stuff, with the quartet playing quite reverbently before what seemed like a concerto for fluffy euphonium. Mayde I've heard the beauty of Art Farmer and Kenny Wheeler too often to be overly impressed by the display of technical minimalism.

The stage for Frøyset night was a visual delight even before the musicians took their places. Chants and cellos, gongs and gamelan, and Oxley's uniquely personalised



At front left: The Celebration Orchestra consisted of Phil Wachsmann and Alex Kolosowski (violins), Peter Koch and Alfred Zimmerlin (cellos), Frank Grzeskowiak, Hayden Chisholm and Ernst-Ludwig Petrowitski (violin and clarinet); Johanna Bauer (trumpet); Phil Minton (vocal); Sven-Arne Johansson (accordion); Van Hove (piano); Pat Thomas and Matt Ward (electronics); and the percussion section of Mark Neaseur, Jo Thores, Jochen Butner and Oskar Muerth.

The first piece was by Bill Dixon and introduced by the composer, drawing on his extensive other career as a scholar and educator. The audience was forewarned that, should a portion of the work not reflect the intention of that piece, then may the stop the music and request an action replay. Dixon opened on solo flagellum: mellow and dark this time, followed by Phil Minton's wonderful voice intoning, "I don't know how I made it through all those years". The full orchestra came in like New Orleans capsizing into the next Millennium. The ensuing abrupt silence brought a second Minton declamation that led into an action concert. This pattern took us through a series of high quality evocative statements on bassoon, clarinet, Van Hove's acoustic piano, staccato strings, and Oxley leading a percussive array. Following a bleak soundscape (Minton "I didn't have a place to say goodbye on the coast"), there came a rebuilding, frosty through tenative strings, constructive piano and so on, into a joyous ensemble passage. A difficult written section for the horns was cut into by Bill Dixon. Well, we'd been warned. A somewhat verbose explanation was offered for what, to these ears, was a minor error in note length during a scored unison section. Sadly, this cast a shadow over the remainder of the performance, not only for the audience, but for the orchestra

too, whose feelings were fuelled by Matt Ward walking off.

The interval was followed by a tour-de-force by Slovenian composer/trombonist Vinko Globokar, constructing his instrument from mouthpiece outwards while playing continuously. Wandering from behind Oxley's kit, he immersed the trombone's bell in a large golden bowl also a mat black plinth. Temporarily abandoning the instrument, a shirtless Globokar lay prone, making music from his own fleshed out skeleton. A complete original, walking the tightrope of virtuosity with his own perfect balance.

The finale to this imaginatively programmed two day event was Tony Oxley's own *A Reel For The Celebration*, for which the orchestra became an extension of the birthday boy's own drunkit. After all, he's been remodelling and adding to it for some years. As he told *Microphone magazine*, "The most important thing for me is the enlargement of my vocabulary". This 60th birthday celebration was living proof of how far he has gone towards achieving his goal.

ANDREW SHONE

Time Zones

Italy Molfetta various venues

Now in its 13th year, the Time Zones festival remains content in virtual obscurity. Brian Eno, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Pea Kuti and Philip Glass have all passed through, and the elusive Enrico Morroni has become its honorary president. With such credentials how come it's managed to elude the attention of music fanatics outside Italian borders for over a decade?

Previous Time Zones have included Nasrat Fateh Ali Kahn performing with Gregorian chanters in old Barns cathedral, a Sub Rosa night with David Shea, Charles Hayward and



Instrumental insects Artition

Hus, and one of Nick's last ever performances. If this year was any indication it remarkably survives by attracting audiences consisting of ten per cent comic fans and 90 per cent curiosity seeking locals. What's in it for the artists? Perhaps its loosely defined ethos of "producing unprecedented events... and the ability to create combinations between genres" appeals to them, as Time Zones requires that musicians bring to the event a unique repertoire or collaboration to highlight their "state of musical research" – thereby allowing room for experimentation and risk. Living up to its predecessors, several music tents were staged this year; some surreal one-offs among them.

The festival opened in rural seaside Molletta with Florian Fricke's Popel Vuh performing a soundvision installation titled Good Rooms I-5. Popel Vuh's soundtrack work for film director Werner Herzog and their early Moog explorations might have changed shape, but the primary ethos remained firm in the Good Rooms piece. Fricke's unwavering interest in sound frequencies and the human response they produce here translated into the installation's philosophical textures and atmospheres. The Good Rooms theme derives from Fricke's

interest in the Orpheus legend and Julian Jaynes's discovery of a neural lobe which is sensitive to frequencies between 2000 and 5000 hertz – the frequencies of singing cicadas and bees. "I thought it's practically divine in modern man."

Transforming the ancient casbah surrounding Molletta's byzantine church into rooms, the installation was designed to stimulate the hallucinatory centre, as the audience proceeded through the spaces at night, experiencing the series of projections and sounds (all programmed to within 2000-5000 hertz). The piece was designed to emphasise the lobe's potential release through heightening the senses. "You have to learn very hard to understand what is this?" Fricke said. "With the visual loops there's no direct story so you have to look. We want to sharpen your vision and audio sense."

Above the cobblestone streets video monitors screened images of larvae and Crickets represented in a projected fresco surrounded by the insects in Jaynes' research) scored with the sound of cicadas and bees. Glimmering in a church courtyard the final confrontation was with Fricke's 50 piece Human Race Choir, which hummed vocal lines derived from the composer's research. The setting and the intentions

couldn't have been more atmospherically engineered, but the crowd's confusion required the sensory confrontation Popel Vuh were aiming for.

The following night Molletta's byzantine church opened its doors to the less than holy John Cale. Breezing in for a semi-acoustic guitar and piano set, the inlander concert for TSO was breathtaking. Cale had left his raucousness in New York and instead focused on the beautiful simplicity of some emotive songs. Perched on the altar just under a statue of Christ, Cale, sporting a pair of aviator red shade sunglasses, played a selection of his co-compositions with Lou Reed, followed by a very version of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah". His version of Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel" was an emotional weeping machine as was his rendition of "My Funny Valentine" and the encore of his own "Thoughtless Kind".

The venue for Arturo Siski's Enzo Project is an ex-Italian Youth Fascist Association building turned bohemian concert hall. The classically trained pianist Staten was inspired to combine pop and classical sensibilities when he first heard The Rolling Stones' "Ruby Tuesday". His rearrangements of Enzo's chamber orchestra were being performed for the first time. He began with piano solos of "Roman Twilight" (from *For Films 2*) and pieces from *Another Green World*. The ensemble joined Staten for "Sparsaflit"; "An Ending" (from the Apollo soundtrack) and excerpts from *How Come* (the album Arts Staten's admiration for Enzo's worldview). "He's a restless and curious man and I think his music reflects this kind of personality" was evident in both his performance and his rearrangements. The concert ceremony agreed with the audience's classical sensibilities.

What Staten did to Enzo, New York jazz pianist Uri Caine did to Gunther Mahler. A lifelong interest in Mahler's soundworld and an offer to score a Mahler documentary prompted Cane to play with the composer's create and destroy structure. Cane and his ensemble alternated rearrangements of his themes with explosive improvisation that took Mahler's work into the realm of freeform jazz and back. Mahler's rhythm differed

(according to Cane's interpretation) in that you don't keep a groove... the expressiveness comes in speeding up and slowing down". The presence of Wee DJ Osei was arousing curiosity and when Mahler samples, scratches or atmospheres were mixed in with the compositions, it gave the audience the strange experience of a new musical layer easily referencing itself. The interaction of the ensemble (drawn from New York's downtown jazz community) on excerpts from Mahler's first and fifth symphonies was remarkable.

The Time Zones night titled as London's Shekere, we showcased some innovative club sensibilities rarely seen even in London. Highlighting the pervasive sense of media cross-fermentation, it brought together the "futuristic fusion" of Outside featuring Kid Loops, the string quartet Instrumental, and multimedia wiz wonders AniRon. Known for their strong accompaniments on Orbis's "Dobow Lakes" and 4 Hero's Two Pages, plus their brilliant live interpretations of dance classics, Instrumental played to an unassisted audience, who'd probably never heard "Little Fluffy Clouds" before, but nevertheless reacted to the ensemble's sound as the group elicited from songs like Orbis's "I'm Forever" Moby's "Hymn" and the Shamen's "Re-Evolution". Ryuchi Sakamoto's "1919" and Enzo's "Snowfall" were played interactively with AniRon's sound software program Phase. With a grid for each instrument projected above, the musicians played the notes that appeared on screen with live improvisational changes mixed in from AniRon. The playful irony of interfacing electronic classics arranged on strings and replayed via live sequencing software left chills on the floor.

Collaborations continued as Instrumental's Evertton Nelson provided the strings for Outside's set of Electro-Jazz. Andreas Allen and Kid Loops dropped the beats for Matt Cooper's rotating piano and percussive jams. With fierce live renditions of "Don't Know Who I Am", "Transmigration" and "Revelation" taken from their *Supposed* album, Outside's live energy was so infectious they stayed on for three and a half hours.

ANDREA COVINGTON

SCRATCH! Th 19 Nov '08 WIRE 4 plastikman rothko

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november

new notes at a glance information from spnm

1 LSO

Adestra...
BSF

Gemini

Granger arr. Hobbes*** White
Hobbes*** Smith, Parsons
ICA Theatre, The Mall, London
MPV 0171 590 3813

**2 Royal Philharmonic
Orchestra**

Bachmair*** Mendelssohn,
Bruckner
BM

4 Pipers Three

Hed. Tietjen, Bagert,
Arcasell, Morley, Thompson***
Reiner, Leigh, Burnell***
St John's Church, Fleet St, London
EC4 0081 787 2415

PTM1: Tribute to Satie

Satie, J. White
CH PTM

**6 PTM2: Feldman's
For Philip Guston'**

Feldman**

CH PTM

Philharmonia Orchestra

Lindberg
BPH

**Dead Glamorous -
Film and Music**

Munn, Vividarr Barber,
Moran, Poppy
Grosvenor Hall, Grosvenor House
Bath BA1 0325 46362

**7 PTM3:
Speak/Sing/Play**

L Ball*

CH PTM

**Dmitri Smirnov 50th
Birthday Concert**

Smirnov***
St Georges Church, Vauxhall,
Surrey, London SW1

**8 Gemini with Alison
Wells, soprano**

Minchin*** S Hanmer***
Wilkins*** Grange
Lumsden*** Beirish,
Kager*** Sanderson***
Hul

**10 Music Theatre
Wales**

Berkeley
Kingston Theatre, London
Bath BA2 0225 463662

**11 London
Saxophone with
Evan Parker**

JR

**PTM4: John Tilbury
plays early Terry Riley**

CH PTM

**12 Martin Baker,
organ**

Mendelssohn, Becker,
Locardi, Baker
St Andrews' Church, Reddish,
London E4 4CA 0171 916 9085

**Delta Saxophone
Quartet**

JR

Desert III - Landscape

M McCabe

JMR

**Orchestra of St John's,
Smith Square**

Woolrich, Strauss, Walton,
Beethoven
AH

RNCM Henze Festival

Seminar/Workshop

ANM

**13 PTMs: Yonty
Solomon, piano**

Beni-Santa, L Ball*** T Riley***
CH PTM

RNCM SO

Hercz*** Beethoven

BNM

**BBC Philharmonic
14 Henze*, Beethoven,**

BYOM

**15 PTMs: Collective
Phenomena**

L Ball, the collective

parties

Padre/Señor House, St Paul Rd,
London NW1 0171 570

Paiphra

Stucky, Cage, Druckmair***

BNM

BCMG

Matthews, Weir, Baldwinage***
Schwartz, Gruber

CRIS Cores, Bentley, Scott
Birmingham B1 0121 236 3622

Gemini

Byrnes, Cooper, Westbrook,
Weston, Bradenck
JCA

**16 Cheltenham
Contemporary
Concerts**

Hoyes*** Pitchfork***

Fantasy*** Ryd, Lewington,

Scott, Scammon

Town Hall, Imperial Square

Cheltenham GL56 6JZ 01243 227979

**17 The Chameleon
Ensemble**

Butler, Webb*** Holst, Bridge,

West, Grange

BNM

**18 PTM7: Keith
Barber, Nancy
Rutter et al (2 concerts)**

Impressionism, Barber***

Bray House, New End Square

London NW3 0171 376 0741

A New Look

Reich, Alveez, Montague***

Cage, Gefland, Fox

Gascoigne Hall, Warwickshire Museum of

Building, Banbury, Oxon
01865 474161

21 Gemini

Reich, Alveez, Montague***

Cage, Gefland, Fox

Gascoigne Hall, Warwickshire Museum of

Building, Banbury, Oxon
01865 474161

22 Neil bright Cecilia

Brill, Carter, Wilkenson

BNM

23 Del Niente

Kunzig, Feldman,

Lathermann, Wolff, Kusleig,

Feldman

The Great Hall, King's College,

London WC2 0181 960 5816

24 Marco Polo

Tan Dun*

BNM

**25 RAM String
Orchestra**

Eliash, Meister, Welsh*

Tikhonovsky

RAM Symphony House, London

NW1 0171 873 7300

*** 21 spnm at
Huddersfield**

Contemporary Music
Festival

Gedim*** MacKay, Jones***

Green*** Hodson*** Prior,

Industry***

St Thomas' Church, Bradford

West, Huddersfield HD1

01484 330326

new notes, the monthly listings magazine published by spnm, is an essential guide to what's happening in new music. Events listed in full in **new notes** are summarised on this page. In November we're at the Huddersfield Festival of Contemporary Music with electroacoustic music and new works for members of the Steve Martland Band and we're also in London with the BBC Singers. Call us for more details! ■

**25 Cambridge New
Music Players**

Brahme, Lyger, Cianfan***

The Hollies, Munroe, Groux

Polyphony Series, Bach BMU

81225 433362

**26 The Personal
Touch**

Coppen, Gher

St Andrews' Church, St Andrews i

Steve, London EC1

0171 336 3666

American Piano Music

Gershwin*, Feldman, Adams

Adrian Boult Hall, Purcell Room

Bermondsey SE1 0171 256 5622

The Desert Music

Zeppa, Belibit, Crawford-

Beiger, Rech

BNM

**Music of Arvo Pärt &
Eriko-Swan Tsuru**

Pärt, Tsuru

QFM

*** 27 BBC Singers
spnm day**

works from the spnm

shortlist***

Amateur Concert, 50 Bedford

Row, London WC1

0171 638 3696

**Harry Partch's Original
Invented Instruments**

Partch Drummond

BNM

**28 Elliott Carter 90th
Birthday Concert**

Carter

BNM

**30 Double Bass 2:
Great Britain**

Redgate, Corfean, Moore,

Planting, Penneyhaugh

The Great Hall, Dept. of Culture

London WC1 0171 873 0269

**London Chamber
Group**

Bailey, Burnell, Spaser,

Taylor, Sola, Gao, Parsons,

Cage

Grove Hall, Regent Street

London W1 0171 274 0397

KEY:

* spnm event

** World Premiere

** UK Premiere

* London Premiere

BMG: Broad Music

Information Create

Strandje Plus, London W1

0171 699 8167

ICA: N.A. Thomas, The Mall,
London SW1 0171 930 3645

JBB: St John's Smith Square,

London SW1 0171 222 1061

PTM: Player/Tire Music

Prinzel, Tucker 0171 420

1000 Jacobins 0171 415 2847

RHM, QED, PR

South Bank Centre, London

SE1 0171 730 4342

RNCM: Royal Northern College
of Music, Oxford Road,

Manchester M13

0161 967 5278 or 5279

spnm
PROMOTING NEW MUSIC

new notes

new notes
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november 98

out there

November's selected live events, club spaces and broadcasts



On stage

Christie Barber & Band Performing Dead Gnomes, specially commissioned music for an evening of experimental cinema from Jean Genet, Kenneth Anger and others. Bath University Hall 6 November, 7.30pm. £12.25. Bath 451

Django Bates & Quiet Nights Brit jazz luminary presents his softer, more reflective side. Manchester RNCM 17 November, 7.30pm. £12.£10. 0161 907 5278

Karrison Burrowsale Music Theatre Wales

perform the composer's sinuously bruised opera *Punch And Judy*. Bath Kingswood Theatre, 10 November, 7.30pm. 01225 826431

Jack The ice maiden cometh. Manchester Apollo 25 November; Birmingham Symphony Hall 27; London Palladium (29). **Pete Riegert** Launching his new Reel album with Chris Cutler and John Greaves. London Weavers 3 November. 0181 771 1063

Ndubuisi Obasi's Tokoloshe Traditional

South African songs. Cuban music and blistering free jazz from the SA ex-pat

saxophonist and group. Brighton Sails Bembridge Theatre, 28 November. 0856 01273

64 30102

Backtrack 3000 + Endemic Veed Si Bigg headlines the Language Records night, which also features DJs from Germany's Chrome label and Tony Thorpe. London Upstarts at the Garage, 6 November. 9pm-3am. £6. 0171 607 1818

Lol Coxhill + 46,300 Fibres + Nik Turner + Ted Milton Improvisation session from ubiquitous saxophonist blowing off with the Heavenfield man and Blurt bawler. London Red Rose Club, 8 November. 8pm. £4. 0171 263 7265

Dr John + Ola Dara New Orleans blues veteran on the road, with support from avant-blues trumpeter Glasgow Fruinmarket (13 November), Manchester MOH (14), Cambridge Corn Exchange (15), Warwick Arts Centre (16); London Forum (17), Norwich Travel (18)

Funk-Da-Mental + Bakassi Javida

Salamat Qawal Traditional Asian music meets fiery English beatster son. London Blu (6 November); Brendon Watermans Arts Centre (13)

James Hardway Quintet + Witchman

Live, polyrhythms in bass from Hardway's energetic group plus the Birmingham boys' spectral breakbeats. London Suburbia, 5 November. 0856 1981 960 4590

Kate Bush Ambient bassed strings by her louche number to Club Integral, with support from Del Tap Computer! Del! London Upstarts at the Garage, 1 November. 8pm. £6. 0171 607 1818

Richard Kirk + FM Dialect Dark Electronica from the ex-Cabaret Voltaire man plus Neuzauter's multi-mixes with the metal. London Garage 8 November. 08. 0171 607 1818

High Llamas + Jim O'Rourke + Schneider TM + Stock, Hasvens & Walkman One-off date to mark the release of the Llamas' remastered LP *Lalo Sojo*. London Improv Theatre, 11 November. 0171 228 6612

High Risk Aspirito Nando's Tokyo power the roar into town. London Dublin Castle, 4 November. 0171 485 1773

Live Baitz + Lol Coxhill + John Edwards/Steve Noble + Ticklish

The opening night of a new London club space, Contraband Chapel, for experimental improvised/electronic music. Features John Wheal's Casa ensemble, improv from Lol Coxhill and mates, simple tickle, plus live, videos and DJ's London Levesham Arthouse, 14 November. 0856 350 0171 277 7856

John May's Indo-Jazz Fusions

Violent Meyerl and his all-new youth@oup of mouthula raga-boppers. Bath University Hall 18 November, 7.30pm. £8. 01255 826431

Muzikas & Maria Steinben

Traditional Hungarian ensemble perform folk arrangements by Bela Bartok. Bath University Hall 18 November, 7.30pm. £8. 01255 826431

Pete Namlook + Alquimia + Modulatas

Just when you thought the Fair-sunroom had disappeared into the void, he comes back for a set of live electronic ambience. London LA2, 4 November, 8pm-midnight. £9.50. 0171 434 0403

Ivo Perelman + The Remote Viewers

A must for sax addicts with the highly touted Brazilian tenorist and the Prog rock-free jazz, the London Spot, 12 November. 8pm. £8. 0171 247 9747

Penn Ubu David Thomas's Cleveland punks are still fighting. O2 Academy, Hoxton (25 November); London LA2 (26)

Eddie Prevost + Evan Parker Two elder statesmen of Improv don't let pride get in the way. Local nasties Guapo support. London Upstarts at the Garage, 21-22 November. Info 0181 963 0949

Robyn Schulkowsky & Derek Bailey American percussionist Schulkowsky and guitar innovator Bailey pool resources. London Vorax, 8 November. £7.50. 0171 254 6516. Bailey also appears solo, with Something Else at Newcastle Live Theatre, 4 November. 8pm. £7.50. 0191 232 1232

Sound Mountain Music inspired by the people of Mongolia, with Michael Omartian and group London Church of the Holy Innocence, 22 November. 8pm. £7.15. 0181 291 1089

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion R&B dandies trash the place while promoting their new LP *Arson*. London Shepherds Bush Empire 27 November. 0171 771 2000

Surface Noise Antarjel presents live performances on a double decker bus driving around London by Scanner (performing, not driving the bus) made up of sounds gathered on DAT after a walk around the same route 12-14 November. For full details call Antarjel 0171 637 2994

Transglobal Underground World Music/Rave Turners supporting them, weirdly rock gods Page and Plant. Glasgow SECC (2 November); Manchester Arena (3); Wembley Arena (5 and 6). 0171 379 1313

Trevor Watts Mojez Music Drum Orchestra More polyrhythmic power-drums from the veteran World tour. Oxford St Barnabas Church, 27 November. 8pm. 01865 791355

Norma Winston + Kenny Wheeler UK premiere of Wheeler's new mix of jazz and poetry. Minos, Manchester RNCM, 3 November, 7.30pm. £12.£10. 0161 907 5278

piano for an evening of 'banned music' including Oliver Messiaen's *Quatuor For The End Of Time*. London Church, 16 November. 8pm. £9.50. 0171 499 1783

Stacey Collins Spoken word tour for rock's Jon Ishaun Baracut (9 November), Glasgow Pavilion (10), Dublin Vicar Street (20-21); Bristol Colston Hall (23); Oxford Apollo (24); Derby Assembly Rooms (25); Manchester Academy (27); Birmingham Alexandra Theatre (28); Norwich USA (29); Warwick Arts Centre (30); Newcastle University (2 December); Sheffield Octagon

(31); London Astoria (4-6)

Roxane Two nights of Prog-Improv mayhem from the out-there Japanese duo, who've invited guest Ron Anderson (of US outfit The Molecules), and others to be revealed on the nights. Local nasties Guapo support. London Upstarts at the Garage, 21-22 November. Info 0181 963 0949

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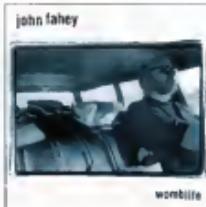
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WIRE

epiphanies

For Mike Barnes, life would have been a bummer, were it not for *Ummagumma*

The Big Bang came aged 12. The shock wave that followed blew me onto a 25 year course of playing music. Which in turn explains why I'm sitting here committing these words to print rather than counting the spoils of a sensible career. Few people besides Mozart had an advanced musical taste at that age and I was no exception. Mine was for the popular classics, music from shows like South Pacific and a smattering of pop. Buying Herb Alpert's *This Guy's In Love With You* seemed a logical step. I proudly told my friend Mike: "What? You bought it, or your parents bought it?" He asked disbelievingly: "I did," I replied, and in an instant realised what 'uncool' meant.

Mike's brother Ant was the local 'head': seven years older than us, tall, skinny, shoulder-length corkscrew hair, bellowing loon pants. Their family was affluent, friendly and accommodating. They had a big house in Norwich and a stereo to match. It was the first place I saw a proper mix. We soon became best friends and a group regularly convened at Mike's place on Saturday evenings to play records from brother Ant's collection.

The first thing I remember Mike putting on was Pink Floyd's 1969 double album *Ummagumma*. It had been out a few years already, but I knew virtually nothing about them. I dimly recall he played side three's 'Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Growling With A Pct.', which to these still untrained ears sounded like a nocturnal cabal of demonic chipmunks gathered by a Scottish drunk. But first we had to negotiate Rick Wright's 13 minute 'Syzygy'. What I heard was a huge, eerie mellotron and tympani theme, a splintered discordant piano solo, shadowy abstract forms, animal chases, nebulous sounds from other worlds... Then a cacophonous undergrowth of vanished tapes, out of which the main theme loomed like a monolith.

'Syzygy's' epitomises *Ummagumma*, the apogee of psychadelia and/or self-indulgence run amok. Those viewpoints were unknown to me at the time, as were Ceci Taylor and Varése, to whom the piece was later compared. But my predilection for *Cosmo Flyer* was about to be destroyed. Indeed, my tastes were so half-formed that I barely noticed them being blasted away by these new sounds that left a delicious feeling of disturbance in their wake.

I grew to love the rest of the album, especially the incandescent space rock of 'Set The Controls For The

Heart Of The Sun'. Ant's collection also introduced me to Hendrix's Electric Ladyland, King Crimson and more Pink Floyd. It was *Ummagumma* that held me, challenging me to grasp its essence. Cycling off in the dark to meet friends at the Biohazard Village Bonfire Party, a chunk had broken off Pink Floyd's universe and was whirling like a nebula inside my adolescent head. Everything looked different now. Life would never be the same again.

Back on Earth, Mike and I were part of a group of guitarists struggling with their *Tune A Day* tutor books, refusing to admit we had little aptitude for the instrument. After many sore-fingered hours sequestered in the bathroom (so as not to disturb the neighbours) playing 'Au Clair De La Lune', I worked out the three-note bassline to 'Set The Controls...' I also

for two acoustic guitars with whisky miniature bottles as slides, a bell borrowed from my parents' mantelpiece, a cuckoo pipe, a recorder, anything we could find. Nothing if not resourceful, we also had a wind powered electric organ. The fact that the fan was almost louder than the instrument wasn't too big a handicap given its utterly unmusical owner, who moved his hands randomly over the keyboard. But it sounded good. I named the piece 'Heaven'.

Keen for public recognition, we appropriated a tape machine from the classroom cupboard and played 'Heaven' during break time. But we held back its sequel, 'Hell', which even we realised was quite appalling. The beautiful, willowy Christine Denry approached me: "It sounds like Pink Floyd," she said. I reddened, both with exultation from her proclamation and because she was actually talking to me. The detention we got for using the tape machine was a small price to pay.

Most of the group would probably have dismissed the music if it wasn't theirs, and some lost interest once we'd recorded it. Plainly, they lacked my level of commitment. For them it was just something to do. But maybe Pink Floyd feel the same about *Ummagumma*. Apparently, they'd be quite happy to have it surgically removed from the Floyd body of work. Yet it's their most exploratory album, precisely because they were then prepared

to take risks and overreach themselves. They also admitted that they weren't particularly good musicians. Well, they had that much in common with Branchild.

Once Pink Floyd released the plodding Dark Side Of The Moon, which they are still proud of, my interest in them began to wane. Branchild had the good grace to disintegrate before lapsing into mediocrity, just as we were beginning to play reasonably well. I moved with my parents to Hampshire and took up playing drums.

Eight years ago I bumped into Mike in London. During the awkward conversation he announced himself 'happily married' and working in magazine distribution. I gave him my phone number, but had to ask him for his. What would he make of 'Heaven' now, or *Ummagumma*? Squirm in excruciating embarrassment, probably. He never called, of course, which is a shame. I'd still like to thank him for helping me get where I am today, though I'm not sure he'd understand why.



Pink Floyd circa 69

discovered that by turning the guitar over and drumming on the back I could do a passable imitation of Nick Mason's tom-tom mienra. I'd cracked the Floyd rhythm section!

At last I was ready. Aged 13, I formed a group with Mike to play our own music. The only snag was, none of us could play chord sequences — or much else, come to that. Besides, we were short on instruments. Some friends could actually manage a few blues licks by now, but we lacked a game plan and the vocabulary to emulate any of our heroes. So we often ended up playing free improvisation by default, or at least when one of us suddenly slipped into a different metric, and the rest of us would hore off after him as best we could. Calling ourselves Branchild, we recorded the results on Mike's mono reel-to-reel when his parents were out. One of our earliest pieces was a rhythmless splurge

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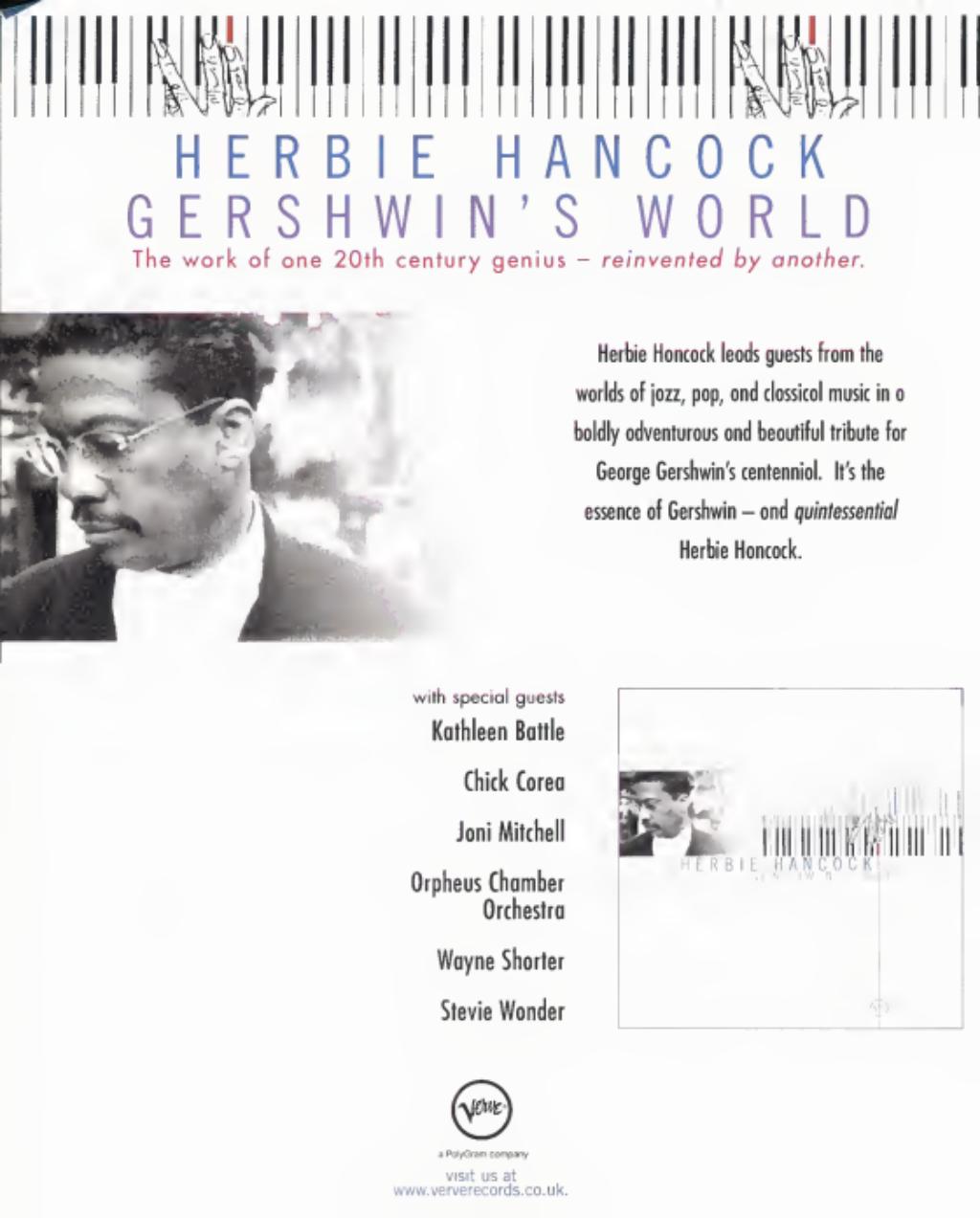
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